



THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF '76"

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THE LIBERTY BOYS' HORSE GUARD: OR, ON THE HIGH HILLS OF SANTEE.

By HARRY MOORE.



The "Liberty Boys" dashed down the slope and headed the wagons off. They shot the guard of the first wagon and the driver elevated his hands in terror. "Don't shoot!" he cried.

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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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The Liberty Boys' Horse Guard

OR,

ON THE HIGH HILLS OF SANTEE.

By **HARRY MOORE.**

CHAPTER I.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS'" HORSE GUARD.

"Orderly!"

"Yes, sir."

"There is, in my force here in Charleston, a company of young men known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76.'"

"Yes, sir."

"Their commander is a young man by the name of Slater—Dick Slater."

"Yes, sir."

"I wish to see this young man, Dick Slater, at headquarters, as soon as possible."

"Very well, General Lincoln."

The orderly bowed and withdrew.

It was April of the year 1780.

General Benjamin Lincoln was in command of the patriot army of the South, with headquarters in Charleston, South Carolina.

This army consisted of about three thousand men.

A few days prior to the one on which we write, Dick Slater and a portion of his company, to the number of twenty, had arrived in Charleston.

The young commander of the "Liberty Boys" had been sent down there from the North by General Washington, with a message to General Lincoln, and as he was to travel rapidly he had selected nineteen of his men to accompany him. The nineteen were the youths who had the best and swiftest horses, and they had made fast time on the trip, and had reached Charleston, and Dick had delivered the message.

The young man was now waiting to see whether General Lincoln had any return message to send.

General Lincoln was sitting there, looking down at the floor in a sober, thoughtful manner, when the door opened and the orderly announced:

"Dick Slater."

As he stepped back away from the door a handsome young man of perhaps twenty years entered, and doffing his hat, bowed to the general.

"Good afternoon, General Lincoln," the newcomer said, in a full, musical voice. "You sent for me?"

"Yes, Captain Slater. Have a seat," motioning toward a chair.

Dick Slater took the seat and then looked inquiringly at his superior officer.

"Captain Slater," said the general, after a few moments of silence, "I have sent for you to ask you to do some work for me."

"I shall be glad to make myself useful during the time that I am here, sir."

"Ah, that is what I wished to speak of, first, Captain Slater. Did the commander-in-chief say anything regarding how long you were to remain here?"

The young man shook his head.

"No; he said nothing regarding that at all, sir."

"But you supposed you were to merely bring the message and then return?"

"Yes."

"Well, in the letter which the commander-in-chief sent me, by you, he said that if I needed any aid that I might retain you and your guard here awhile and put you to work."

"Indeed?" said Dick.

"Yes. How does that suit you?"

"First-rate, sir."

"Then you are not in a hurry to go back?"

"Not at all; I am more than willing to go wherever duty calls me, and to stay there as long as it is wished that I shall stay. I like it here, very much, and so do the members of my guard, and I would be glad to remain awhile and help you, if there is work that I can do."

"Well, there is work that you can do, Captain Slater, I am sure. From what I have heard of you and your 'Liberty Boys,' there is work to be done here that can better be done by you than by any other persons."

"What is the nature of the work, sir?"

"It is scouting and spying, Captain Slater."

"That is the kind of work I like."

"So I have heard. And I have heard, also, that you are wonderfully expert and successful at this work."

"I always do my best, sir."

"And that is good enough. Now, as you may know, Captain Slater, General Clinton has come down into this part of the country, and his intention is, undoubtedly, to capture Charleston."

"There can be no doubt regarding that, sir."

"Well, I wish to have information regarding him and his operations in this vicinity, and I believe that you can keep me informed, if anybody can do so; and that is the reason I have sent for you."

"I shall be glad to undertake the work, General Lincoln."

"I am glad to hear you say that."

"I shall enter upon the work at once, sir?"

"Yes, at once."

"Very well. Am I to go and come as I please?"

"Certainly, Captain Slater. I shall give orders to that effect."

"And for my men to be allowed to do the same?"

"Yes, certainly."

"For I shall need the assistance of my horse guard, sir."

"Of course."

"When doing real spy work I can work better alone; but when scouting, it is better to have a party along, so as to put up a fight should a party of British be encountered suddenly and unexpectedly."

"Yes, yes; I understand."

"And you will wish me to report every day?"

"As nearly as may be; of course, if nothing of importance has been learned, there may be a wait for two or three days, till something is learned."

"Very well. Then I will report every day, or as often as it is necessary."

"That is satisfactory, Captain Slater."

"Very well. I will now be going."

The young "Liberty Boy" rose, and saluting, bade the general good afternoon, and took his departure.

"Jove," he said to himself as he was leaving the house, "this will please the boys, I know. Some of them were say-

ing, just before I came away from their quarters a little while ago, that they would like to stay down South awhile, as they like it here, and now they are going to get to do so. I am well pleased, also, for I like it, and shall enjoy spending a few weeks here."

He was soon back at the quarters where the other "Liberty Boys" were, and as he had expected would be the case, they began plying him with questions regarding what was wanted by the general.

"I suppose we are to go back North, Dick?" remarked Bob Estabrook, a bright, handsome youth, who was indeed Dick's best friend and a lifetime comrade, they having grown up together, their parents' homes adjoining, up in Westchester county, New York.

"Guess again, Bob," with a smile.

"Aren't we to go back right away?"

"No."

"What did he want with you, then?"

"Something that will please you boys, when you learn what it is."

This interested and excited the youths.

"Then tell us what it is, quick."

"Yes, yes!"

"What did he want, Dick?"

"He didn't give you a message to carry back to the commander-in-chief, then?"

"No," said Dick. "I will tell you what he wanted with me."

"Go ahead," from Bob, as Dick paused.

"He wants that we shall remain here awhile, and do scout and spy work."

"Great Scott, Dick, is that so?" from Bob.

The others uttered exclamations of delight and surprise, as well.

"Yes, Bob."

"But I thought we had to return to the North."

"I thought so, too, Bob."

"Well, how do you know that we do not have to do so?"

"There was something regarding the matter in the message that we brought General Lincoln."

"Oh, there was, eh?"

"Yes; General Washington wrote that if General Lincoln could make good use of us he was welcome to keep us here awhile."

"Hurrah! Say, I'm glad he wrote that!"

"So am I."

"And I! And I!"

Dick gazed around upon the faces of his "Liberty Boys," and smiled.

"I thought you would be pleased," he said.

"Pleased? We are more than pleased," said Bob.

"We're tickled half to death," from Mark Morrison.

"That's phwat we are afther bein', begorra!" declared Patsy Brannigan, the Irish member of the company.

"Yah, dot ish so!" from Carl Gookenspieler, the German member.

"Phwat d' yez know about it, Cookyspiller?" cried Patsy, in supreme scorn. "Yez had betther kape thot pertatythrap av your'n shut, so yez had!"

"Don'd you vas gall me Gookyspiller!" exclaimed Carl, excitedly. "Dot vas peen nod my name, py shimmanetty!"

"Shut yer trap, Dootchy," said Patsy.

"I vill shutted it ven I don'd vas gotted retty, you pig Irishmans."

"That will do," said Bob. "Shut up, both of you, or I'll take you by the back of the neck and bump your heads together."

"Don't do that, Bob," grinned Sam Sanderson. "Their heads are so soft they would squash like an overripe muskmelon if you were to do that."

"Ton'd you pelief me!" said Carl. "My hait vas not so much softness like dot, you pet me."

"Shut up," said Patsy. "Phwat's dhe madther wid yez, Dootchy? Don't yez see dhe byes are afther wantin' to talk abhout dhe scoutin' an' sphyin' worruk?"

"You talk too muchness yourselluf, Irish," said Carl.

Then the two subsided, and the youths discussed the matter in all its bearings, and the more they talked of it the better they liked the prospect of remaining in the vicinity and doing scout and spy work.

"The general said we might get right to work, boys," said Dick, "so let's go out and bridle and saddle our horses and start out."

"That's the talk!" from Bob. "But, say, what shall we call ourselves, Dick?"

"I'll tell you," said Mark Morrison; "let's call ourselves 'The Liberty Boys' Horse Guard.'"

"All right," was the cry, in chorus.

"Three cheers for 'The Liberty Boys' Horse Guard!'" cried Bob Estabrook.

The cheers were given, and then Dick cried:

"Now, to horse, boys! We will be up and away at once."

Half an hour later "The Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" rode out of Charleston and away into the country.

CHAPTER II.

A PATRIOT IN DANGER.

"Up with the rebel, men!"

It was a thrilling, a wonderfully exciting scene.

Standing underneath the spreading branches of a giant tree, which stood beside the road running northward from Charleston, and about eight miles from the city, was a party of perhaps a dozen British soldiers. In their midst stood a man dressed like a farmer. His arms were tied together behind his back, and around his neck was a rope, the other end of which was thrown over a limb of the tree, and was now being held by half a dozen of the redcoats.

Standing a few yards distant, weeping as though heart-

broken—which they very nearly were—were a woman and two girls, one about eighteen years old, the other perhaps sixteen.

The man in question was a patriot settler by the name of John Jordan. The woman was his wife, and the two girls were their daughters.

The girls were named respectively Ruth and Lizzie. Ruth was the elder.

Half an hour before we introduce them to the reader's notice the party of redcoats had put in an appearance, and after having eaten all they wanted, had taken some things from the house that suited his fancy. Not satisfied with this they had demanded that the settler give them money. He had replied that he had no money, but they said they knew he was lying, and that he had money hidden about the place somewhere. The truth was that the redcoats looked upon the patriot settlers as legitimate prey, and the foraging parties often secured gold and silver by threatening to shoot or hang the patriots. They had threatened to hang Mr. Jordan, but he had held out, protesting that he had no gold or silver, and now they had the rope around his neck, and were ready to pull their victim up.

The leader of the party, a lieutenant, had given the order, "Up with the rebel, men!" and the redcoats pulled at the rope, tightening it, and choking the patriot; but they had such work to do before, and understood that their leader did not wish the man pulled up just yet. The main thing desired was that he should be frightened into telling where his gold and silver was hidden.

"How does that feel?" the lieutenant asked, a sneer in his voice.

"I will acknowledge that it doesn't feel pleasant," was the reply, in a voice that trembled somewhat. It was not fear for his own safety that made the man's voice tremble, but sorrow for his wife and daughters. John Jordan was a brave man.

"Ah, it doesn't feel pleasant, eh?"

"No."

"Well, it lies with you whether or not we shall go ahead, and hang you till you are dead. Tell us where your gold and silver is hidden, and we will not hurt you."

"I have already told you that I have no gold and silver."

"Gold or silver, then. You certainly have one or the other."

"You are mistaken. I have neither."

"You lie, you blasted rebel!"

"It is easy for you to tell a helpless man he lies."

"Well, you do lie. You have gold or silver, or both, hidden somewhere about the place, and I know it."

"You are mistaken."

"Shall we pull him up, lieutenant?" asked one of the men who had hold of the rope. He gave a jerk at the rope as he spoke.

"No, wait a moment, Jeffers. If he doesn't tell us where the gold and silver is hidden we will hang him; that is as certain as that you and I stand here. But we want

the money worse than we want his life, and I am going to exhaust all the means I have at hand to make him talk, before giving up."

"It will do you no good," said the settler. "If I had any gold or silver I would gladly give it for my life, but I have none."

"Bah! I have heard that same story many times before, eh, boys?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And have found that the men who denied having gold or silver strenuously for a time finally weakened, and told me where I would find both gold and silver."

"That's right, lieutenant."

"Yes, and I think it will be the same here, in this case."

Then the lieutenant went around and placed his hand on the shoulder of the weeping woman.

"Stop crying, and listen to me, woman," he said sternly.

The woman lifted her face from the folds of her apron and revealed eyes that were red from weeping.

"Tell me where your husband's money is hidden, woman," the lieutenant said. "If you wish to save his life, tell me at once."

"We have no money, sir," faltered the woman.

"Bosh!" with a stamp of the foot and an impatient gesture. "I know better. I don't want to hear such talk. Tell me where the gold and silver is hidden, or your husband dies! Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir; but I—I—give you my word that—that—we have no gold or silver."

An impatient exclamation escaped the lips of the young lieutenant.

"Do you think more of your money than of your husband?" he asked, sneeringly.

"No, no; no, indeed! If we had the money I would gladly give it up to save him. I would die to save him! Oh, sir, put me in his place, and if you must hang someone hang me!"

The woman held out her hands imploringly, and her tones and words were almost enough to move a heart of stone. But the British officer had a very hard heart, and he said angrily:

"Bah! Don't try to fool me. I know that you have money hidden, and that you are simply trying to save it, thinking that we won't hang your husband—but you are mistaken. We will hang him! yes, we'll make an end of him, as sure as you are standing here!"

"Spare him!" the woman pleaded.

"If he will tell where the gold and silver is hidden."

"Don't talk to him, Jane," said the man. "He is a heartless brute, and will do as he threatens, no matter if you beg him on your bended knees, to spare me."

"You are right, so far as my refusing to spare you is concerned," said the lieutenant. Then he tapped the elder girl, Ruth, on the shoulder, and said:

"My girl, if you care anything for your father, tell us where the money is concealed."

"I can't tell you, sir," the girl said, "for the reason that we have no money."

"I know better; every man has more or less money on hand. It is necessary, and I have found that in nine cases out of ten the American farmers and settlers have some money laid by, that they have cheated King George out of, and I am making a business of collecting it."

"Do you turn it over to the king?" asked John Jordan, in a sarcastic voice. Even though threatened with a horrible death, he was absolutely fearless.

"Ha, ha, ha! I don't mind telling you, my rebel friend, that up to the present time I have not sent more than a bushel of gold and silver to the king." And the lieutenant laughed heartily, his men joining in.

"I judged as much," said Mr. Jordan. "In fact, you are nothing more or less than highway robbers."

"Don't use harsh language, rebel; it doesn't really become you, and it is not calculated to make us feel more friendly toward you."

"I don't expect to make you feel friendly toward me. And there is no reason why I should not speak my mind and tell the truth."

"Well, I don't know about that. It isn't always politic to speak your mind, even though you might be telling the truth. Very few people do so, under all circumstances. The best thing you can do is to tell where your gold and silver is concealed."

"I have none."

"Bah!" Then the lieutenant tapped the younger girl on the shoulder.

"Do you care enough for your father to save his life, miss?" he asked. "If so, tell us where the gold and silver is hidden."

"I would tell you, sir, gladly, if we had any gold and silver," was the reply; "but we have none."

"Bah; you all think more of your money than you do of the life of your father and husband. Well, let it be so, and when we hang him up to that limb, you can look at his dead body and realize that you are to blame for his death."

"Oh-h-h-h!" moaned the girls, while the woman sobbed out:

"You must not hang my husband, sir! Oh, please spare him!"

"If you will tell where the gold and silver is concealed."

"They can't do that, lieutenant," said the man. "There is no gold or silver hidden about this place, so they are helpless to save my life in the manner you speak of."

The lieutenant made a gesture of anger and disgust, and turning to his men, said:

"You boys hold onto the rope; the rest of you come into the house with me. We'll make as thorough a search for the gold and silver as possible, and then, if we don't find it, we will hang the rebel."

"Let's hang him first, and all hunt for the gold," growled one of the men who had hold of the rope.

"No," was the reply. "I will give him a chance for life, for the sake of his wife and daughters, and then, maybe, if we fail to find his hoard, they will meet me halfway, and tell me where it is hidden."

The lieutenant and five of the men entered the house, and began searching for the money, which they thought must be somewhere about.

They spent nearly an hour, and then came forth, looking tired and disgusted, as well as angry.

"Find it?" asked one of the men holding the rope.

"No," was the growling reply. "We didn't find it." Then the lieutenant turned to the woman and girls.

"Now is your time to tell me where the money is," he said. "It is your last chance. If you don't tell, and quickly, we will hang that rebel, as sure as anything can be!"

"We would tell you if there was any," said the woman; "but we have no money, and now, please do not hang him, sir! Please set him free! I beg of you not to hang him!"

"How about you, now, rebel?" asked the lieutenant, stepping up and glaring into the man's eyes. "Will you tell where the money is concealed, and thus save your life?"

"I have long ago told you that I have no money," was the firm reply.

"Up with the scoundrelly rebel, men!" roared the lieutenant in a rage.

CHAPTER III.

THE HORSE GUARD APPEARS.

There was no doubt regarding the fact that the lieutenant meant what he said this time.

He was tired, angry, and disgusted, and had made up his mind to hang the patriot, and thus be revenged for being—as he deemed it—cheated out of the money he had expected to secure.

The men understood that their leader meant it also, and they did not hesitate, but pulled down on the rope with all their might.

Up into the air went the patriot, and as he did so screams escaped the lips of the woman and girls.

"Spare him!" wailed the woman, falling upon her knees and holding up her clasped hands entreatingly. "Don't hang my husband!"

"You are foolish to beg of me," sneered the lieutenant. "There is only one way to save him, and that is by——"

He never finished the sentence, for at that instant there came the clatter of horses' hoofs, and a party of twenty horsemen dashed up.

"Rebels!" cried the lieutenant; "run for your lives, men!"

Those who had hold of the rope let go instantly, and Mr. Jordan, almost strangled, dropped limply to the ground; but his wife and daughters leaped to his side and quickly unfastened the rope.

"Water—bring water, quick!" cried Mrs. Jordan, and Lizzie ran to the well and came back with a pail of water.

Mrs. Jordan poured some in her husband's face, and then rubbed his face and temples, and Ruth chafed his wrists, and presently he came to with a gasp.

Meantime the newcomers—who were no others than Dick Slater and his horse guard—were busily engaged. They had appeared just in the nick of time, and would have been able to knock over a number of the redcoats had it not been that the woman and girls were right in the midst of the British, and it would have been impossible to fire on the enemy without endangering the lives of the three.

The redcoats had recognized the fact that to this they were indebted for their safety, so far, and they retreated, around the house, keeping the woman and girls between them and the newcomers, who had leaped from their horses and were running toward them.

"After the scoundrels, boys!" cried Dick. "Get around the house as quickly as possible, and the instant you catch sight of them, give them a volley."

The youths replied that they would, and they dashed past the little group on the ground under the tree, and ran around the house at the top of their speed.

When they came in sight of the redcoats they lifted their muskets and fired.

As they fired while running at full speed, their aim was not good—in fact, they did not really aim at all, but merely guessed at the elevation to give the muskets, and the result was that only three of the redcoats dropped.

The next moment the others reached the timber, and quickly disappeared from view.

The "Liberty Boys" did not stop, but kept right on running. They wished to strike the enemy as hard as possible, and they entered the timber and followed closely upon the heels of the fugitives.

Dick caught sight of one of the men, and fired a shot that brought the man down.

When he reached the side of the fallen man he thought the fellow was dead, but after a brief examination he saw that his bullet had merely "creased" the soldier, stunning him temporarily.

The young commander of the Horse Guard blew a shrill blast by placing his little fingers in his mouth.

This was a signal for his men to cease pursuing the enemy and return, and soon they were all back where he stood.

"Why didn't you let us follow them and bag some more of them, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I don't think we could have captured or killed any more of them," said Dick. "And they might slip around and get our horses, and get away; so lay hold, four of you, and carry this wounded man back to the house."

"He isn't dead, then?" asked Mark Morrison.

"No, merely creased, which has rendered him temporarily unconscious. I want to ask him a few questions as soon as he comes to."

Four of the boys lifted the unconscious redcoat and carried him back to the house, and deposited him on the grass near where Mrs. Jordan and her daughters were working with the husband and father. Mr. Jordan had just come to, and Dick approached and asked if he might have the pail for a few minutes.

"I have a wounded man here," he explained, "and wish to bring him to, so as to ask him a few questions."

"Certainly; take the pail; we don't need it now, for my husband has recovered consciousness," was the reply from the woman, who was delighted to find that her husband was not only not dead, but not much injured.

By the time Dick and his comrades had brought the redcoat back to consciousness Mr. Jordan was himself again and he walked up to Dick, and extended his hand.

"I wish to thank you and your brave young comrades for saving my life, sir," he said, earnestly.

"You are more than welcome, sir," was Dick's reply, as he grasped the man's hand and shook it. "We are always glad to do anything to aid patriot settlers, and to cause the redcoats trouble."

"Who are you, sir, if I may ask?"

"My name is Dick Slater, sir."

"What is that? Dick Slater, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, well! I have heard of you, Mr. Slater, but never expected to see you."

"How comes it that you have heard of me?"

"I have a son, Jack, who is in the Northern army, and he was home a year ago, on a furlough, he having been wounded, and he told us all about you and about your 'Liberty Boys.'"

"Indeed? Well, here are some of my command," indicating the youths.

"I am glad to know you, boys," the man said. Then he introduced Dick to his wife and daughters, who were greatly pleased to make the acquaintance of such a famous young man as Dick.

When Dick had shaken hands with the woman and girls, he again turned his attention to the wounded redcoat, who was now conscious and sitting up. His arms were tied together behind his back, and he was looking pretty sick. It was evident that he was not feeling as chipper as he had felt fifteen minutes before, when he was one of the six who had pulled the rope that lifted Mr. Jordan off terra firma.

"Well, my man," said Dick, "how do you like the change in your circumstances?"

"I don't like it," was the gruff reply.

"I suppose not. How does your head feel?"

"Big as a bushel basket."

"You may thank your lucky stars that you have any head left. I came within an ace of ending your career with that bullet."

"I guess you did."

"You are right; two inches lower, and you would never have known what hurt you."

"Well, I guess you would not have done much worse

by me had you killed me, than you have done, for you have made me a prisoner, here, tight and fast."

"Oh, well, I am not going to hang you until after you have had a chance to do something to save your life."

"Hang me!"

The fellow fairly gasped the words out, and stared at Dick in affright.

"S-surely y-you wouldn't h-hang me!"

Dick pretended to be surprised. He arched his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Well, that would be murder."

"Well, what name have you for what you were doing to Mr. Jordan, here, when we appeared upon the scene a little while ago?"

"Oh, we weren't going to really hang him," said the redcoat.

"You were not?" in a skeptical voice.

"No; we were just trying to frighten him into telling us where he had hidden his money."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, that's the truth."

"Let me ask you something."

"All right. Go on."

"Did you ever know an unconscious man to talk?"

"No, I can't say that I have ever known anything of the kind."

"Then how did you expect Mr. Jordan would be able to tell you where his money was hidden? He was unconscious when you let go of the rope and let him fall to the ground."

"Is that a fact?" exclaimed the redcoat, with a very fair assumption of surprise, but which did not at all deceive Dick.

"Yes, and you know it."

"I assure you that you are mistaken, sir. I had no idea the man was unconscious. Certainly he must not be able to stand much choking."

"What do you expect—that a man will be able to hang by the neck for five or ten minutes without losing his breath?"

"No; of course not."

"Certainly not; and no man living can hang by the neck for five minutes, or even for three minutes, without becoming totally unconscious; and you, who have no doubt had much experience in helping string up honest patriots, must know that very well."

The youth's voice was stern, and he impressed the redcoat with a feeling that he was in danger of being handled severely.

"I assure you that this is my first experience at such work, sir," he hastened to say. "I never helped pull a man up in my life before."

"Is that the truth?" asked Dick.

"Yes, it is."

"Well, I don't believe it. I would be willing to wager that you have helped pull on the rope that lifted more

than one poor fellow, and I don't doubt but that you have been among those who held the bodies of some of the victims too long suspended."

"No, you are mistaken."

It was evident that the redcoat was becoming somewhat alarmed.

"Now, then, answer me a question or two," said Dick.

"I will do so, sir," in a humble voice.

"And you will answer them truthfully?"

"If I answer at all, it will be truthfully."

"Very well. How far from here is the main encampment of the British army?"

The fellow hesitated a few moments, and then said:

"Well, I'll answer that question, for I don't see how twenty of you fellows could do the British any harm. It is five miles to the main encampment."

"In what direction?"

"Almost due east from here."

"Over toward the ocean, eh?"

"Yes; we came from New York on ships, you know—or perhaps you didn't know that."

"Yes," said Dick, "I knew it."

CHAPTER IV.

EXTRACTING INFORMATION FROM A REDCOAT.

Dick asked the redcoat a great many questions, and managed to extract a good deal of information from the fellow, who did not really realize that such was the case. He thought he was not conveying any information in the answers to the questions Dick asked—that is to say, any information that would do his questioner any good—but he was mistaken. Dick Slater was a youth who could read between the lines, and by summing the whole matter up, when he had finished asking the questions he had a pretty good idea of what the British were doing, and what they intended to try to do.

"Now that I have answered all your questions, are you not going to let me go my way?" the redcoat asked, when Dick had finished.

The youthful leader of the "Liberty Boys" shook his head.

"Oh, no," he said.

"But I understood that you were to let me go free if I answered your questions."

"You had no reason to believe or understand anything of the kind, my friend. I did not say any such thing as that."

"Well, I understood it that way," in a sullen voice.

"I don't see how you could have understood any such thing as that. No, you are not to be permitted to go free; not by any means."

"And you are going to hold me a prisoner?"

"Certainly."

"What will you do with me?"

"Take you to Charleston and turn you over to the commander there."

"So that's what you are going to do with me, is it?"

"Yes."

"Well, that won't be so bad. I will soon be free again."

"How do you make that out?"

"Well, my commander and the British army will soon have Charleston reduced and the rebels all prisoners, and then I will be released."

"Perhaps it may turn out as you have outlined, and then again perhaps it may not."

The fellow made no reply, but looked sullen and angry, and Dick asked Mr. Jordan if he had a spade.

"Yes. What do you want with it, Mr. Slater?" he replied.

"We dropped three of the redcoats around back of the house, and I think they are dead. We will go and bury them."

Low exclamations of horror escaped the lips of Mrs. Jordan and the girls, and Dick said:

"Yes, it is a bad business, Mrs. Jordan and girls; but it is war time, you know, and it is either kill or be killed. I would rather do the killing than be killed, much as I dislike to harm any human being."

"That is right and natural," said Ruth Jordan, who was a bright, sensible girl. "And think how they were going to hang father!"

"That's so," said Lizzie. "I'm glad it was some of the redcoats who were killed, and not the 'Liberty Boys.'"

"Thank you, Miss Lizzie," said Dick. Then he took the spade out of Mr. Jordan's hands, and led the way around to where the three dead redcoats lay; he was followed by Mr. Jordan and four of the "Liberty Boys." The others remained behind, to watch the horses, and see to it that the British did not come and steal the animals.

It did not take long to bury the three corpses, and then they made their way back to where the rest were standing.

"Well, I'm glad you were humane enough to give my dead comrades burial," said the redcoat, sullenly.

"Would you and your comrades have done the same for some of my boys had the situation been reversed?" asked Dick.

"I don't know."

"I'll wager they wouldn't have troubled themselves to do so, Dick," said Bob.

"Well, it is somewhat different," said the redcoat, with an arrogant, superior air. "We are soldiers of the king, while you fellows are merely common fellows—rebels."

"You pig-headed fool!" cried Bob fiercely. "I can hardly keep from kicking all your teeth down your throat! Do you really think that you are better than us—that British soldiers are better than patriots?"

"Of course I do," was the defiant reply.

"Great Scott, Dick! Untie the fool's hands and let me at him!" cried Bob, his eyes flashing. "I want to take some of the conceit out of him, and teach him a lesson!"

"Oh, don't pay any attention to him," said Dick. "A man who does not know any more than he does ought not to be noticed at all."

"I'd give a good deal to have him stand up in front of me, with his hands free, for about five minutes," said Bob.

"I'd be willing to wager a good deal that he wouldn't stand up that long," laughed Mark Morrison.

"That's what he wouldn't!" from Sam Sanderson.

"Shure, an' Bob'd knock dhe two oyes av dhe spalpane into wan so quick it'd make his head swim, begorra!" declared Patsy Brannigan.

"He vould t'ink von muel had kicked him der face in," said Carl Gookenspieler.

It happened that the redcoat was a large, well-built fellow, and like Englishmen from time immemorial, he prided himself on his physical prowess. His eyes shone eagerly, as he said:

"Just free my hands and I'll show you! I can thrash that insolent young rebel and not half try!"

He saw Bob was not nearly so large as himself, and he did not believe the youth would be able to stand up before him. This was where he made a mistake; Bob was not large, but he was wonderfully strong, and moreover he was as lithe and active as a cat. Then, too, he was tough as a pine knot, and it was practically impossible to tire him out.

Dick had no fears but what Bob would be more than a match for the redcoat, but he was averse, nevertheless, to permitting the encounter to take place. Bob pleaded that the fellow's arms be freed, however, and that they be allowed to have it out, and so at last Dick consented.

"The fellow is so arrogant and bigoted that a good thrashing may do him some good," said Dick. "But you had better let me take your place, Bob."

"Not on your life, Dick. I will attend to him. I wouldn't give up my place to you for anything. I feel that he has personally insulted me, and I am going to settle with him."

"He hasn't said anything to you more than to the rest of us, old fellow."

"Well, I was the first one to want a chance at him, and I am therefore entitled to it."

"I'll settle that," said the redcoat, insolently. "I'll thrash each of you in turn; so it doesn't matter which one I begin with."

"Did you ever hear such insolence?" cried Bob. "Free his arms, quick, so I can knock some of that conceit and arrogance out of him."

"You will have a hard time doing it," said the redcoat.

"I don't think so; and I'll quickly prove it to your satisfaction."

One of the boys unfastened the bonds holding the redcoat's wrists.

"Now you are free. Get ready to take a good thrashing," he said.

"Don't you be afraid about my having to take a thrash-

ing," said the fellow. "There isn't one among your whole crowd that can give me a thrashing."

"Don't be too sure," said Dick. "Now, go ahead and make your boast good if you can."

"All right." He started toward Bob, but Dick said:

"One moment. Before you begin I want to warn you not to try to make a break and escape, for if you do my boys will shoot you dead. Do you understand?"

"Yes. But I think that if I succeed in thrashing this fellow you ought to let me go free."

"Oh, no; that would not be fair at all. You are our prisoner, and we are going to hold you. I am simply permitting this affair to take place in order to teach you something, and cause you to have more respect for patriots, in the future."

"Say, Dick, make that agreement with him," said Bob, with a grin. "Let him go free if he succeeds in thrashing me."

"No, I won't agree to that, Bob, for he might succeed in dealing you an accidental blow that would knock you senseless for the time being."

"An 'accidental' blow?" said the redcoat, sneeringly.

"Yes; that is the only way you will ever land a blow on my comrade, there."

"I'll show you!" and the redcoat rushed at Bob, striking out wildly as he did so.

It was practically impossible for him to hit Bob. The "Liberty Boy" and Dick had practised sparring together for years, and Bob was as expert as his comrade, and was as quick in his movements as a panther. The redcoat tried his best to land a blow, but found it impossible to do so. All he could do was to tire himself out, striking empty air—the most tiring work a man can do.

When he was becoming pretty badly winded Bob began. He dealt the redcoat blow after blow. He could have knocked the fellow down and out at one blow had he wished to do so, but that would not have been much fun. He wished to give the man a good, all-round thrashing, so he would remember it longer, and have respect for the prowess of at least one patriot.

Bob struck the fellow when and where he pleased, much to the delight of the Horse Guard, who encouraged him, and said things that were calculated to ruffle the feelings of the British soldier.

"Can you really fight, Mr. Redcoat?"

"Why don't you thrash the 'rebel'?"

"You said you would do it easy."

"But he has found it to be quite a hard job, it seems."

Such were a few of the sarcastic remarks indulged in by the "Liberty Boys" and it made the redcoat very angry; he could not help himself, however; he had run up against his master, and knew it.

He fought as desperately as possible, however, and presently went down at full length from a terrible blow straight from Bob's shoulder.

He lay there, half dazed for a few moments, and then

sat up; but he made no move to get on his feet and resume the combat.

"Get up, and let me knock you down again," invited Bob, who was just getting warmed up.

The redcoat shook his head.

"I've had enough," he said.

"What, already?"

"Yes; I know when I have enough. I won't fight any more."

"All right," said Bob in a disappointed voice. "But I think you are not much of a man after all. From the way you talked before the fight began I thought you would be able to make it interesting for me; but you haven't."

"It has been interesting enough for him, though, I think, Bob," said Mark Morrison.

"Yes; I think he will have more respect for patriots, from now on," said Sam Sanderson.

"You don't want to continue the fight, then?" asked Dick.

"No."

"All right; we won't try to force you to fight against your will. Tie his arms, boys."

This was quickly done.

CHAPTER V.

AT MR. JORDAN'S.

Dick asked Mr. Jordan if he could leave the prisoner at his house for a few hours.

"Certainly," was the reply. "But I'm afraid that some of the redcoats will come back here and take him away with them."

The "Liberty Boy" shook his head.

"I don't think there is much danger of that," he said. "In my opinion the British soldiers will not come back here. They will be afraid to do so."

"Well, you are welcome to leave the prisoner, and then if the redcoats come back and free him, it won't be my fault."

"True; and I won't blame you, or hold you in any way responsible for him should he be gone when we return."

"Very well, Captain Slater."

Then the "Liberty Boys" mounted their horses and rode away.

They rode northward half a mile, and then turned toward the east. It was Dick's intention to go over and reconnoiter the main army of the British a bit.

"It will be dangerous work, Dick," said Bob, when Dick told him where they were bound for.

"Well, we will be very careful, of course," replied Dick.

"Shure, an' we'll give thim a good thrashin' av dhey thry for to bodther us," said Patsy Brannigan.

"Yah, dot ish so," said Carl Gookenspieler.

"What, twenty of us thrash the entire British army, Carl?" asked Mark Morrison.

"Yah, dot make no difference ooid; ve can whip dem shust so easy as noddings."

"Shure, an' av dhey got a good look at thot mug av your'n, Dootchy, it's scart to death they'd be afther bein'!" said Patsy.

"Ton'd you pelief me," said Carl. "I vas nod so muchness ukliness haf like yourselluf, Irishmans."

"Oh, gwan wid yez, Cookyspieler. Av Oi had such a face as your'n, it's mesilf'd be afther wearin' a mask dhe whole toime, begorra."

"Dry up, you two," said Bob; "if there were redcoats within a mile of us, they'd hear you quarrelling."

"It's dhe Dootchy, Bob," said Patsy. "Oi niver can make dhe spalpane kape thot taty-trap av his'n shut."

"Vat a lie dot vas peen," said Carl. "I don'd vas dalk half so muchness mit mine mout' as dot Irishmans."

The "Liberty Boys" had gone about a mile when they came upon another somewhat exciting scene.

A party of perhaps a dozen redcoats were plundering a house, undoubtedly the home of a patriot.

"Forward!" cried Dick. "Charge the scoundrels! Show them what 'The Liberty Boys' Horse Guard' can do!"

They dashed forward, with wild yells, and as they drew nearer they called out:

"Long live liberty! Down with the king!"

Their coming struck terror to the hearts of the British.

The redcoats fled like so many startled rabbits.

They rushed around the house and fled into the timber back of the house, but not until the "Liberty Boys" had fired a volley and wounded a couple of them. The fellows did not fall, however. They were able to keep on running.

It was a patriot family, sure enough, and they thanked Dick and the rest for coming to their assistance and dispersing the redcoats.

The youth assured them that they were welcome.

"We are here for the purpose of doing all the good we can for the patriots and the patriot cause," he said, "and we feel that it is our duty to help whenever the opportunity presents itself."

The name of the family was Hargreaves, and there were, besides the man, his wife and three children, two boys and a girl, ranging in age from six to twelve years.

After spending a few minutes in conversation with the family, Dick and his guard rode onward. Half an hour later they came to the top of a hill, and Dick called a halt.

"I want to see if we can locate the British encampment," said he. "It must be within a couple of miles of this spot, I think."

They dismounted, and Dick and Bob climbed trees and took an observation.

They caught sight of the British encampment at once. It was not to exceed a mile away, and was plainly to be seen.

"Well, there is the British encampment, Dick," said Bob.

"So I see, Bob."

"What are you going to do now?"

"Nothing in particular; I simply wished to locate the British encampment, so that I would know where it is, and be enabled to find it in case I should wish to do so at any time."

"Oh, that's the idea, eh?"

"Yes."

The two descended, and then Dick told the youths to mount their horses.

"Which way now, Dick?" asked Mark Morrison.

"Back the way we came; we promised to take supper with the Jordans, you know."

"Yes, so we did."

It was now almost sundown, and by the time they reached the Jordan home it was dusk.

They fed and watered their horses, and then went to the house, where they found a splendid supper awaiting them. Mrs. Jordan and the girls, Ruth and Lizzie, had been busy while the "Liberty Boys" were away, and had cooked a meal fit for anyone.

The youths were not used to such meals, being accustomed to rough camp fare, and they enjoyed it hugely. They complimented the woman and girls on their cooking, and pleased them greatly.

"You ought to be a happy man, Mr. Jordan," said Dick.

"Why so, Captain Slater?"

"Why, for having such a splendid wife and such good and beautiful daughters."

"You are right," was the reply. "I would be very happy, but for the fact that a cruel war is raging, and we know not what may happen. We live in constant fear."

"Yes, that makes life anything but pleasant, Captain Slater," said Mrs. Jordan.

"True," said Dick. "Well, the war can't last forever. Sooner or later it will be over, and then we will be enabled to live in peace once more."

"Yes, but the British may murder my husband, or our son Jack may be killed ere that time comes," said the woman, with a sober look on her face.

"That is possible," said Dick. "But let us hope it may not happen."

"Amen to that!" from Mrs. Jordan.

The girls did not have much to say, but it was evident that they were not displeased by the presence of twenty handsome young men; and when they were the subjects of conversation they blushed and their eyes shone with pleasure.

Two of the "Liberty Boys," Dick noted, seemed to be smitten by the beauty of the two girls. These youths were Tom Saunders and Will Forbes, and as they were handsome, manly young fellows, Dick was glad to see that they were impressed with the girls' beauty.

"I think the girls will take a liking to Tom and Will, too, if they are given a chance to see them a few times,"

thought Dick. "Well, I'll give the two youths work to do in this locality whenever it is possible."

The redcoat prisoner was given his supper, and he ate heartily. There was a sullen look on his face, however, and it was evident that he was not feeling very good. The thrashing Bob had given him had given him something to think about.

The "Liberty Boys" could not refrain from rubbing it into him a bit.

"How are you feeling?" asked one, with a grin.

"What do you think about patriots now?" from another.

"You will have to admit that some of them are your equal in some respects, at least, won't you?" from a third.

"That's all right," growled the prisoner. "I'll make you fellows suffer one of these days. I'll get even with that young scoundrel," and he nodded toward Bob.

"All right, you old scoundrel," grinned Bob. "When you do get even with me I hope you will tell me."

"You'll know it without having to be told!" fiercely.

"Yah, I don't vas tink so," said Carl Gookenspieler. "I vill pet me my life dot ven you are efen mit Pop you vill fint dot you don't vas efen mit him."

"Oh, listhen to dhe Dootchy talk, wull yez!" said Patsy Brannigan in supreme contempt. "Ivery toime he opens his mouth he's afther puttin' his fut in it, begorra."

"I'll make me mine foot into your mout' out, dot's vat I'll do, uf you don'd vas loog ovid, Batsy Prannigan!" declared Carl, belligerently.

"That's a pretty pair of rebels you have there," said the redcoat, sneeringly, and with a contemptuous look at the two.

"Say, phwat d' yez mane by spakin' onrespectfully av an Oirish-Amirikin, ye spalpane, yez!" cried Patsy. "It's meself wull have Dick set yez fray av yez don't look out, an' then Oi'll give yez dhe worrust lickin' phwat iver yez had in your loife."

"Yah, dot is so," said Carl. "Uf you don'd vas sbeak disresbectfulness aboud me I vill sdep on your neck mit both of mine feetses, by shimmanetty!"

"Oh, all you would need to do would be to sit down on him, Carl," said Bob, with a grin. "That would smash him as flat as a pancake."

Carl was short and fat, and weighed nearly two hundred pounds, so this statement of Bob's was not so much out of the way, after all.

"Bah! I could thrash half a dozen like you fellows," said the redcoat.

"Shure, an' yez'd have a harrud toime a-doin' av it," said Patsy.

"You cannod thrash me py mineselluf," said Carl, belligerently. "I gould von thrashing gif you, uf your hants vas tied togedder behind mine pack!"

Whereat the "Liberty Boys" roared, and Carl, thinking he had said something very witty, smiled broadly.

"Oh, look at dhe Dootchy," said Patsy. "He's afther

thinkin' thot he has said somethin' thot wur smart, be-gorra."

"Und don'd I vas sait id?" asked Carl. "Haf you nod der poy's heard make much laughness?"

"Yis; but dhey're laughin' at ye, ye Dootch monkey, yez."

"Don'd you pelief me. I gan't vas fool you dot xay."

"Av coorse yez can't fool me, Dootchy; but yez are afther bein' very aisy fooled, begorra."

At this instant one of the "Liberty Boys," who had been standing guard outside, came running to the door and cried out:

"A force of some kind is coming! I hear hoofbeats!"

CHAPTER VI.

A LIVELY SCRIMMAGE

"Quick, boys! Out of here, all!" cried Dick.

They dashed out of the house, and stood, watching and listening.

The thunder of hoofbeats could be heard coming from the north.

It was so dark it was impossible to see more than twenty yards, so nothing could be discerned.

"Likely it is a band of redcoat troopers," said Dick. "In that case we must give them a reception that they won't forget in a hurry."

"That's what we will do," said Bob.

"Yes, yes!" from a number of the others.

"Hold your muskets in readiness for instant use," said Dick.

"All right."

Closer and closer sounded the hoofbeats.

Dick, who was a good hand at judging such things, decided that there were about thirty of the horsemen.

He told the youths what he thought regarding the number of the approaching horsemen.

"That's about the number I would have guessed," said Mark Morrison.

"Well, we can thrash twice that many," said Bob Estabrook.

"Yah, dot ish so," from Carl Gookenspieler.

"Oh, shut up, Dootchy," said Patsy. "Phwat do ye know about such t'ings, is phwat Oi'd loike to know?"

"I know such a muchness as vat you know aboud id, I don'd vas t'ink," was the reply.

"Sh!" cautioned Dick, and the youths became as silent as death.

The horsemen rode up in front of the Jordan house and came to a stop.

They were just visible from where the "Liberty Boys" stood.

"Jove, I wish I knew positively that they are enemies," said Dick to himself. "Then I would have the boys give

them a volley. But it might be such a thing that they are patriots, though I don't think they are."

"Dismount, men," they heard a voice say. "Let us go in and see if these people will tell us anything regarding that party of rebels."

This was sufficient. They were British troopers, and Dick made up his mind that they would give the redcoats a surprise.

The youths could just make out that the redcoats were dismounting, and then they saw a dark body advancing.

"We will surround the house, so no one can escape," said the voice of the leader of the party, "and if the rebels are not here we will make these people tell where they have gone."

At this instant a low, tremulous whistle sounded on the still night air.

It was followed instantly by the terrible, crashing sound of a volley from firearms.

The whistle was the signal from Dick for the "Liberty Boys" to fire, and they had obeyed it promptly.

The British troopers were so close that great damage was inflicted upon them.

A dozen or more went down, dead or wounded.

Then on the air rose yells, shrieks, and groans.

The volley had come so unexpectedly that the British were taken wholly by surprise and stood stock still, almost paralyzed.

Another whistle sounded.

It was another signal from Dick.

It meant that the "Liberty Boys" were to fire a volley from their pistols.

They had already drawn these weapons, and so were ready when the signal was given.

Crash!—roar!

More redcoats dropped, and with wild yells of affright the rest turned and fled back to where their horses stood, and leaping into the saddles, they dashed away, back up the road in the direction from which they had just come.

Some of the riderless horses followed, while a few of them remained standing, evidently not knowing what to do.

"Hurrah for 'The Liberty Boys' Horse Guard!'" cried Bob. "We routed that gang of redcoats in a hurry!"

"Have you driven them away?" asked Mr. Jordan, coming around the corner of the house.

"Yes," replied Dick, "and we have dropped about fifteen of their number here in your front yard. Bring a candle and let us have a look, to see how many are dead."

"All right; I'll bring one at once," and he hastened back.

"Oh, John, is the battle over?" asked his wife tremulously.

"Yes, Jane."

"And did the 'Liberty Boys' beat them?"

"Yes, and killed fifteen or twenty. Bring me a candle; Captain Slater wants to see how many are dead, and how many wounded."

"Oh, this is terrible!" said Ruth. "Just to think of a battle being fought right in front of our house!"

"Oh, this wasn't a battle," said Mr. Jordan. "It was simply a scrimmage."

"Well, it was bad enough, anyway," from Lizzie, with a shudder.

Mr. Jordan took the candle and went out of doors.

He found the "Liberty Boys" just finishing the work of reloading their muskets and pistols, which was something they never neglected to do at the first opportunity, after an encounter like this one.

They now advanced and looked at the fallen troopers.

They found twelve dead men, and four wounded ones. The four were quite seriously wounded.

"We will bury the dead men, after looking after the wounded," said Dick. "Will you consent to let us carry the wounded men into your house, Mr. Jordan?"

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "I could not refuse to take anyone in under such circumstances."

"Quite right. Well, we will carry them in. You go in and tell your wife and daughters to fix a place for the wounded troopers."

"There is a large, unoccupied room upstairs," said Mr. Jordan. "They may have that."

He hastened into the house, and told his wife and daughters that four wounded redcoats were to be brought in, and the three hastened up to the room, and spread some old blankets on the floor, as there were no bedsteads in the room.

The "Liberty Boys" carried the wounded men into the house and upstairs to the room, and laid them carefully down on the blankets. The poor fellows groaned with pain, for it was impossible to handle them without hurting them more or less.

"Now bring me some old white rags that are clean," said Dick; "and bring some water, and some salve or ointment, if you have any such things in the house."

"Yes, we have plenty," said Mrs. Jordan, and she hastened to bring the articles asked for.

Then Dick went to work, to examine and dress the wounds of the troopers.

Three of them, while quite seriously wounded, would recover, Dick was confident, but the fourth man was very badly wounded, and the youth doubted his being able to pull through.

He dressed the poor fellow's wound as best he could, however, and spoke as encouragingly to him as possible.

Mrs. Jordan did not fancy the idea of having four wounded redcoats in her house, and told Dick so. "I am afraid the British will come here, find them, and burn us out of house and home," she said.

"I don't think there is as much danger of their doing so with the wounded men here as would be the case if they were not here, Mrs. Jordan," said Dick.

"You do not?" in surprise.

"No."

"Why not?"

"Well, if you take good care of the wounded men, nursing them, and giving them food, the redcoats will certainly be somewhat grateful. I don't think they will burn your house, or indeed do you any injury whatever."

"I am glad you think that way about it, Mr. Slater," the woman said. "And I hope you are right."

"I am sure that I am. I have had experiences like this before, and it has turned out the way I have said."

"I think you are right, Captain Slater," said Mr. Jordan.

"Well, we'll take the best of care of the wounded men," said his wife, "and we will hope for the best when their comrades come here to see about them."

"What will we do, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I guess we had better return to Charleston, Bob."

"And come out in the morning, again?"

"Yes."

"You are welcome to stay here, Captain Slater," said Mr. Jordan.

"Indeed, we shall be glad to have you stay," said Mrs. Jordan.

"I think we will return to Charleston," said Dick. "I wish to have a talk with General Lincoln. But I'll tell you what I'll do: I will leave a couple of the boys here to render you assistance in case any redcoats come and attempt to do you any hurt."

"Very well," said Mr. Jordan. "But two could not do much."

"I don't think there will be any necessity for anyone to do anything," said Dick. "But if they are here, and redcoats come and attempt to do anything, the boys can hasten to Charleston and let me know, and then we will come back here to your assistance."

"Very well; and thank you, Captain Slater."

Then Dick named Tom Saunders and Will Forbes as the two who were to remain, and it was easy to see the two youths in question were delighted.

"Begorra, an' thim two young fellers are afther bein' lucky," said Patsy, shaking his head; "it's mesil'd have loiked to have sthayed here, begorra, phwere oi could look at dhe boochiful faces av thim two gurrels."

"Und I vould hav liked me dot shob, mineselluf," said Carl Gookenspieler.

"Jhust listhen to dhe Dootchy, now!" said Patsy.

Dick gave the order for the youths to bridle and saddle their horses and get ready to return to Charleston, and they obeyed at once.

The youth talked with Tom Saunders and Will Forbes, explaining what he wished them to do; and then had a short conversation with Mr. Jordan, telling him what he thought would be the best course to pursue if a party of redcoats should come, and then he bade them good-by, and the youths mounted their horses and rode away in the direction of Charleston.

CHAPTER VII.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" OUT AND AWAY AGAIN.

Next morning Dick called on General Lincoln at headquarters.

He told the general that he was confident, from what he had already seen and learned, that the British were slowly but surely encompassing the city, and that sooner or later they would make an attack that would be almost certain to result in the fall of the city.

General Lincoln pondered for several minutes. He looked at the floor, and seemed to be weighing Dick's words carefully. The truth was that he was not a brilliant general; he was a good man, and a good fighter, and had done good work at Saratoga and elsewhere in the North, but this thing of being commander of the patriot army of the South was rather too much for his capabilities.

He finally shook his head, slowly, and said he believed that he could hold the city against the British.

"I hardly think so, sir," said Dick. "But, of course, it is not for me to advise you. I will do the work set me to do, and make myself and my 'Liberty Boys' as useful to you as possible."

"I don't see how the British can beat my army, here in Charleston," said General Lincoln. "We have possession, and I have caused intrenchments to be thrown up, and am confident that we can beat the enemy off. I will increase my force, however, by getting new recruits from the patriot families of the surrounding country; and I shall depute you to look after that work, also, Captain Slater, if you will be so kind."

"I shall be glad to attend to it, sir."

"Very well."

Then Dick went back to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

"There is going to be trouble here in Charleston, after the redcoats get things in shape," he told the youths.

"Why so, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Why, the British are making all possible arrangements to encompass Charleston and reduce it by attack and siege, and they will succeed, too; but General Lincoln doesn't think so, and that means that the patriot army will be captured."

"Jove, do you think so?" asked Mark Morrison.

"I am sure of it."

"That will be bad."

After some further talk on the subject, Dick ordered the youths to bridle and saddle their horses, which was done; then they mounted the animals and rode out of the city.

They headed for the Jordan home, and an hour later were there.

Soon after they left Charleston General Lincoln had the prisoner the youths had brought there the night before brought before him, and he asked the fellow a good many questions. He secured some information, but was not so

successful as Dick had been. The fact was, the redcoat was so angry on account of the thrashing he had received at the hands of Bob Estabrook that he was in no mood for answering questions.

Indeed, he got so insolent, after the interview had progressed to some extent, that the general threatened to have him taken out and shot or hanged, and then he became more polite and reasonable.

The "Liberty Boys" were given a joyous greeting by all the members of the Jordan family, and by Tom Saunders and Will Forbes.

"Were you bothered by the redcoats during the night?" asked Dick.

"No," replied Mr. Jordan; "none put in an appearance; but I almost wish they would do so, and take the wounded men away."

"Some will be here before very long, I think," said Dick.

"Do you really think so?"

"Yes."

The youth's idea was that a large force would soon appear, and as he had no wish to get his "Liberty Boys" into trouble, he ordered that they should all retire to the timber, back of the house, and remain there until after the British had come and gone.

"Of course, if it is a small force, we will attack it," he said. "But if it is a strong force we will lie low—unless they attempt to harm Mr. Jordan and his family, or set fire to the house; then we will take a hand, and will try to make it so lively for them that they will stop proceedings of that character."

They retired to the timber, and leading their horses back at least one hundred yards, tied them to trees. Then they returned to the edge of the timber and took up their positions behind trees, from where it would be possible to see all that went on at the house.

"I have an idea," said Dick presently. "I will go to the house and tell Mr. Jordan that when the redcoats come, if they seem to be bent on doing mischief one of the girls is to step to the back door, and wave a handkerchief. Then we will be ready to go for the enemy, red-hot."

"That's a good scheme," said Bob.

"Yah, dot ish so," from Carl Gookenspieler.

"Shut up, Cookyspieler," cried Patsy. "Phwat d'yez know abhout such t'ings, innnyhow. Phwy don't yez kape thot taty-thrap av your'n shut, as a sinsible bye should do?"

"You dalk too muchness mineselluf," said Carl, angrily. "You vas haf shust so much pizness to dalk as vat I haf, don'd id?"

"Oi dunno phwat yez mane, an' Oi don't tink yez do, ayther, ye barrel av sauerkraut, yez!"

"Shut up, both of you," said Mark Morrison. "You are worse than magpies."

"Oi'd rayther have chicken poi, av it's all dhe same to yez, Mark, me bye," said Patsy, with a grin.

"Yah, I vill haf some chicken bye, you pet me your life," said Carl.

"That's something we would all like to have," said Bob, "but I don't think we will get any very soon."

Dick made his way to the house and told Mr. Jordan what he wished done. The man said he would have it attended to. "If the redcoats attempt any meanness one of the girls will make the signal," he said.

"All right," and then Dick went back.

"The girls are well, and as pretty as ever, Tom," said Dick, addressing Tom Saunders.

That youth looked astonished, and stared at Dick, whose face was as sober as that of a judge on the bench.

"I supposed that such was the case, Dick," Tom said, after a moment. "But why did you say that to me?"

"I thought you looked as though you wanted to know, Tom," was the quiet reply.

Some of the other youths laughed, as they understood the joke, and among them was Will Forbes.

"What are you laughing for, Will?" asked Dick.

This turned the youths' attention to Will, and they laughed at him, causing him to grow red in the face.

"It's horse and horse with you two fellows," said Bob, with a grin. "They're pretty badly smitten, don't you think so, boys?"

"Yes, yes!"

"I should say so!"

"Anybody could see that."

"Yes, a blind man could see it."

"Oh, say, let us alone, you fellows," said Tom. "You don't know what you are talking about."

"Oh, don't we?" laughed Mark Morrison.

"No."

"You pet me your life ve do know vat ve are talking about," said Carl Gookenspieler, who didn't know, but was determined to pretend that he did.

"Oh, g'wan wid yez, Cookyspieler," said Patsy. "It's mesilf will be afther betthin' innytin' thot yez don't know phwat dhe byes are laughin' abhout, begorra."

"Yah, und I vill pet you don'd vas know innny more as vat I know, you pig Irishman's."

The youths talked and laughed, and had sport with the two youths, Tom and Will, and also with Patsy and Carl, and thus the time did not seem to hang so heavily. It passed much more quickly, seemingly, at least.

Presently Dick stepped out and looked up the road toward the north.

"I should think the British would be coming soon," he said.

Scarcely had he uttered the words when a party of horsemen came around a bend in the road a quarter of a mile north of the Jordan house.

Dick leaped back, out of sight.

"They're coming at last!" he said.

There were at least one hundred of the troopers, and it was evident, from the way they handled their muskets,

and the keenness with which they gazed about them, that they were on their guard against being surprised.

They rode up in front of the Jordan farmhouse and stopped.

The commander, a captain, leaped to the ground and advanced to the front door, where he was greeted by Mr. Jordan.

"Are you the owner of this house?" the captain asked.

"I am," was the reply.

"Your name?"

"John Jordan."

"Did a fight between some British troopers and a band of rebels take place here, last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"And some of the British troopers were killed?"

"Twelve, I believe, sir."

"And how many were wounded?"

"Four."

"Where are they?"

"In the house."

"Ah, you have taken them in then?"

"Yes, sir; and we have nursed them as best we could."

"That is a good thing for you. Do you know where the rebels are who did this work?"

"I do not, sir."

"Did you know they were here when they fired upon the British troopers, last night?"

"No, sir. The first we knew of their presence was when they had driven the British troopers away; then they came and asked me to take the four wounded men in and care for them."

"Ah, and you don't know where they are now?"

"No, sir."

"Very well. May I see my comrades?"

"Yes, sir; come this way."

Mr. Jordan led the officer into the house and upstairs to the room occupied by the wounded men.

The captain greeted the men by name, and examined their wounds.

"Three of them are able to make the trip to the encampment," he said. "But that man there will have to remain. He is very severely wounded. I suppose you will take the best of care of him?"

"Oh, yes, sir," said Mr. Jordan.

"Very well; no harm shall come to you or yours so long as you act right toward us."

The three men who were not so seriously wounded were carried out of the house by their comrades and were placed in blanket ambulances made by tying blankets between two horses, after which the entire party took its departure.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK DOES SOME PLANNING.

The departure of the party of redcoats was a great relief to the members of the Jordan family. So long as the

troopers were there the patriots could not help feeling uneasy. The fact that they had taken the wounded soldiers in and taken care of them was in their favor, however, and had saved them from being bothered. Dick told Mr. and Mrs. Jordan and the girls that he believed they would be safe in future, and that the redcoats would not bother them.

"You have won them over," he said.

"I'm glad of that," said Mr. Jordan.

"Yes, it isn't pleasant to have the fear constantly over one that a band of redcoats may descend at any moment upon you, and burn you out of house and home, and perhaps murder you."

"You are right, sir. And now, what are you going to do?"

"Myself and comrades are going to go scouting around, to see what we can, and learn as much as possible."

A few minutes later the "Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" rode away.

The youths put in two or three days at this, and in that time Dick was fully impressed with the idea that Charleston was doomed.

He had learned that the city was already practically surrounded by the British, and that they were slowly but surely drawing closer and closer, narrowing the circle of British soldiers, until after awhile they would be right up to the city, and then they would be enabled to close in and capture the patriot army, for they outnumbered it three to one.

Dick again went to General Lincoln and explained the situation.

The general listened courteously, but it was evident that he did not look upon the matter as being nearly so serious as Dick was confident it was.

Had he known Dick Slater better he would have given the youth's words more careful consideration, but he thought that the young man was needlessly alarmed.

"I am glad to hear what you have to say, Captain Slater," he said. "But, really, I do not think the British can overpower us here in Charleston. We will be able to beat them off, I feel sure. On the other hand, if we were to leave the city, we would be at the enemy's mercy."

Of course, Dick felt as though he were rather overstepping his privileges in arguing with the general, but he was so sure of his ground, and felt so sorry for the patriot soldiers, that he did argue quite earnestly. He told the general that he did not have the least doubt of their ability to slip away in the night, and make their escape from the city, without having to encounter the British, but General Lincoln shook his head.

"I prefer to remain in Charleston," he said. "I do not believe that the British can beat us here on our own ground, as it were."

Then he went on, and told Dick to keep close watch of the British and report their every move, and to secure as many recruits as possible, and send them in to Charleston.

"That makes me think, sir," said Dick. "I have my

hands so full, watching the British, that I have no time to secure recruits, so I shall have to ask that you place that work in other hands."

"Very well, Captain Slater. I do not wish to overwork you; I will give that work into other hands."

"Thank you, sir."

Dick Slater had another reason for not wishing to secure recruits for the patriot army in Charleston. It was because he did not wish to be responsible for bringing men into what he considered to be a trap."

"That's all it is," he said to himself. "Charleston is a trap, nothing more or less, and I should never forgive myself if I were to persuade a goodly number of men to go there, only to be captured by the British when they invest the city."

Dick had talked to the "Liberty Boys" on the subject, and had told them he was going to try to persuade the general to evacuate Charleston, and they looked at him inquiringly when he returned to their quarters.

"What did he say, Dick?" asked Bob.

"He is determined to remain here, Bob," was the sober reply.

"Is going to stay right in the trap, eh?"

"Yes."

"Did you explain to him that is was a trap?"

"Yes."

"And he still insisted on remaining?" asked Mark Morrison.

"Yes, Mark."

"That is queer."

"Well, I don't know; I think he believes I am overestimating the danger."

"He ought not to think that; you have been out, scouting around, and have had the opportunity of seeing how things really are."

"That is true; and I told him how things are, but still he was unconvinced. He seems to think that so long as he remains in Charleston he is safe."

"That is a mistake," said Sam Sanderson. "Why, General Washington got out of New York City in a hurry when General Howe started across from Brooklyn Heights. He didn't think that because he was in a large city he was safe."

"No; he realized that his army was outnumbered greatly by the enemy, and that he would certainly be overwhelmed if he remained, and so retreated to Harlem Heights."

"Yes; and General Lincoln ought to retreat, also."

"Where could he retreat to?" asked one of the youths.

"Well, he could fall back to the High Hills of the Santee, forty miles north from here," said Dick. "There he would be absolutely safe."

"Have you ever been there, Dick?" asked one.

"Oh, yes."

"Say, Dick, what is to become of us?" asked Mark Morrison. "Surely we are not called upon to remain in Charleston when the redcoats make the attack, and permit ourselves to be captured?"

Dick shook his head.

"No; we will not do anything of the kind," he said. "I do not feel that we are called upon to do so. If General Lincoln wishes to stay, and permit the jaws of the lion to crush him, that is his business, but I think that self-preservation is the first law of Nature, and we will turn up missing about that time."

"We will not be in the city when the British knock at the door, eh, Dick?" said Bob.

"No."

"That's the way to talk, begorra," said Patsy Brannigan. "We wull not be here whin dhe redcoated spalpanes make dhere appearance."

"Yah, dot ish so," said Carl Gookenspieler. "Ve vill be some odder blace ven der retgoats come der city in."

"Oi t'ink it'd be a good t'ing to l'ave yez here, Cooky-spiller," said Patsy. "Shure, an' yez are afther bein' such a noosance thot it'd be betther fur all av us if yez wur ter be capehoored by dhe ridecoats, begorra."

"Yah, I don'd vas t'ink so," said Carl.

"There is another thing," said Dick, motioning to Patsy and Carl to be silent. "I had promised General Lincoln that I would get all the recruits I possibly could, and send them to him here in Charleston, but I told him a little while ago that I could not do that."

"I know why you don't want to do it, Dick," said Bob. "You don't want to get men into such a trap."

"That's it, exactly, Bob."

"But what excuse did you give him?" asked Mark Morrison.

"I told him that it kept me so busy watching the doings of the redcoats that I really did not have time to secure recruits, and that I would have to ask him to relieve me of my promise to do that."

"Ah, that was a good excuse."

"Yes."

"Did he accept it?"

"Oh, yes; he said that was all right, and that he would get somebody else to look after the work of securing new recruits."

"Well, the poor fellows will be brought in here to be captured, just the same, Dick," said Sam Sanderson.

"Yes, but I won't be to blame."

"True."

"I would put a stop to the work if I could; but you know I have no right to work against the commander of the patriot army of the South."

"True; all you can do is to keep your own fingers out of the work of securing recruits."

"You are right. I hope, though, that the persons who are deputed to secure recruits will not be very successful."

"Why not go around to the houses of the patriots of the vicinity and warn them not to join the patriot army and go into the city, Dick?" asked one of the youths.

"I would not do such a thing as that, Joe; it would be a species of treason."

"I can't see it that way; it would be for the good of the men, and, indeed, it would be for the good of the cause, for the men who were thus saved from being captured by the British now might join the patriot army later on, when it would be possible for them to do some good."

"Say, Dick, aren't we to have any hand in the fight when the British make the attack on Charleston?" asked Bob.

"That is you, Bob," smiled Dick; "you are always wanting to fight, and I believe you would rather remain in Charleston and take all the risks of being captured, rather than miss being in the battle."

"Well, I guess you are not far wrong in that."

"I'll tell you, Bob, I do intend that we shall have a hand in the battle, but we will fight from the outside, and not from within the city."

"How is that?"

"It is my intention to remain out in the country when I see that the British are about ready to make the attack, and as soon as the battle is under way we will enter it, but will attack the enemy from the rear."

"Ah, I see!" exclaimed Mark Morrison.

"By so doing we shall be enabled to do a great deal more damage than we otherwise would be able to do," said Dick, "and we will not be in such great danger of being captured."

"That's true enough," said Sam Sanderson.

"That programme suits me very well," said Bob. "And now, Dick, I have a suggestion to make to you."

"What about, Bob?"

"In regard to this matter of getting patriots to join the patriot army and help fight the British."

"Well, what is the suggestion?"

"I know a way to keep the patriots from entering the city and being captured by the British, and at the same time you will not be acting in a treasonous manner."

"All right; I shall be glad to hear how this may be done."

"It is very simple. Get them to join our horse guard, and fight with us. They will be under your control then, and will go and come as we do, and they will thus be outside the city when the battle begins, and will escape being captured."

"I'll do it," said Dick. "It's a good scheme; but I will not do it unknown to General Lincoln."

"How will you explain to him without raising his suspicions?"

"I'll tell him that my force is too small to successfully resist the forces of British that we are constantly running up against, and that I shall be glad if he will permit me to increase the number of my men by recruiting them from the patriots of the vicinity. I'm sure he will be willing, and then we will get to work and secure as many as possible, before his men can get at them."

"That's the scheme, Dick; go and see him at once."

"I will," and Dick hastened back to headquarters.

CHAPTER IX.

GENERAL LINCOLN SURRENDERS.

The general told Dick he was welcome to increase his force to such size as he wished, through recruiting members from among the patriots of the vicinity, and so he went to work to do this at once.

For the next ten days he was busily engaged, recruiting and keeping watch of the redcoats, and at the end of that time the "Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" numbered one hundred.

The majority of the members of the company were young men, though there were a few of middle age. All were brave men, and the force was now quite formidable.

During the ten days that had passed the British had gradually closed in around the city, and Dick felt sure that it would soon be too late for the patriot army to escape.

He decided to have one more talk with General Lincoln, and try to persuade him to evacuate the city, and he did so. He explained the situation, as he understood it, from observation, and tried to impress upon General Lincoln's mind the fact that the situation was indeed serious, but the general had got it into his head that he could hold the city in spite of the British, and refused to entertain the idea of evacuating.

So Dick gave up the attempt to persuade him, and retired, feeling disappointed.

It was now the first week in May, and the British were getting close to the city. Dick felt confident that they would soon advance upon the city from all sides and make a concerted attack, and he held a council with his "Liberty Boys," and discussed the matter thoroughly.

"We must not permit ourselves to be caught in the city," Dick said, and the others agreed with him.

"How soon do you think the British will make the attack?" asked Bob.

"It is hard to say?" was the reply; "but they may make the attack within a few days. They have the city completely surrounded, and are close up to it now, as you all know."

"Well, what shall we do?" asked Mark Morrison.

After some discussion it was decided to ask permission from General Lincoln to remain out in the country a week, looking after the British who were foraging and pillaging the patriot homes, and Dick's idea was that by that time the attack would be made by the British, and then he and his "Liberty Boys" could get into the affair, and make an attack from the rear and do a good deal of damage, without running much risk of being captured.

So he asked permission to make an extended scouting trip, and be absent perhaps a week, and General Lincoln granted the permission.

The "Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" rode out of the city that afternoon, and managed to evade the British, who had not quite established a continuous chain as yet, and when

they were safely past the enemy Dick and his men drew breaths of relief.

"I tell you, I don't think we would be able to get through the British lines very many more times," said Dick.

"You think so?" from Bob.

"I do; they are about ready to make the attack."

"Then we don't want to get very far away, Dick."

"I know you don't, Bob," with a smile. "For you are always ready for a fight."

"So are the rest of you," with a grin. "You can't lay all the blame on me."

The "Liberty Boys" did not go far. They paused on the top of a hill a mile beyond the British lines, and went into camp for the evening and night.

"We will be within easy hearing distance if the British open fire," said Dick. "That is, if they attack in the night time; and if they attack in the day time we can both hear and see."

The British did not make an attack on Charleston that evening or night; nor, indeed, did they do so until several days later. The "Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" remained out in the country, watching and waiting, however, and on the 12th of May the British made the attack.

Dick and his "Liberty Boys" heard the firing, and rode at the top of their horses' speed to the scene. They attacked the British from the rear, and fired volley after volley, doing considerable damage.

To their dismay and disappointment, however, the firing soon ceased.

"General Lincoln has surrendered!" cried Dick. "Well, it was the best thing he could do, as it has put a stop to the firing, and will be the means of saving a great many lives."

Dick was right; the patriots had surrendered, and as soon as this had been settled a force of two hundred troopers set out, to try to run the party of youths down, and kill or capture them.

Had Dick had the full one hundred "Liberty Boys," he would not have retreated very far, but would have stopped and given the enemy a good thrashing; but there were only twenty of the original "Liberty Boys," the rest being young men of the vicinity, who had not had much experience in fighting, and who might become demoralized and flee at a critical moment.

Taking this into consideration, Dick kept up the retreat, much to Bob Estabrook's disappointment.

"Oh, say, Dick, let's stop and give those fellows a thrashing," he said. "We have run from them long enough."

Dick explained the matter to Bob, which he could do without the others hearing, they riding side by side. Bob could not help admitting that there was wisdom in Dick's course, but he did hate to flee before the redcoats.

They had better horses than the majority of British troopers, and succeeded in getting away from them in safety. When they reached the home of the Jordans they told the story of the fall of Charleston, and Mr. Jordan and the members of his family expressed great sorrow.

"Yes, it is bad," agreed Dick. "But it can't be helped now."

"I should have thought that General Lincoln would have evacuated the city before he was completely surrounded and hemmed in," said Mr. Jordan.

"Dick tried to get him to do so," said Bob. "But he would not do it. He thought he could hold the city."

"Too bad," said Mr. Jordan, with a shake of the head.

"Yes, so it is," agreed Dick.

"What are you going to do now, Captain Slater?" the patriot asked.

"I hardly know."

"Will you return to the North?"

Dick thought a few moments, and then said:

"I don't think I shall return right away."

"I am glad to hear that."

"It is my belief that the British will overrun the country, and do a lot of damage, and perhaps, by remaining in these parts awhile, we may be able to do a good deal of good."

"Yes; but it will be dangerous, don't you think?"

"Yes, to a certain extent. But then, we are always in danger, and have become used to it."

It did not take very long to find this out.

The British had captured Charleston and the patriot army, and was jubilant. The commander, General Clinton, sent out parties in all directions, both to plunder the patriot settlers and to search for Dick Slater and his "Horse Guard," of whom the British had been told by some of the Tory citizens of Charleston.

General Clinton knew Dick Slater personally. He had met him more than once, and was well aware of the fact that there was not, in the entire patriot army, a man who was so dangerous to the king's cause as was this beardless youth. General Howe, three years before, had offered a reward of five hundred pounds for the capture of the youth, who was known far and wide as "The Champion Spy of the Revolution," and while Dick had been captured on two or three occasions, he had always managed to escape, and the five hundred pounds had never been earned by any British soldier.

General Clinton wished to capture Dick, or drive him out of the country, however, and so he again renewed the offer of five hundred pounds for Dick's capture.

"Bring him to me, here in Charleston, a prisoner, or drive him out of the State," he said, and the British troops said they would do so.

It did not take him long to learn that a concerted and determined effort was being made to capture him, and it made him all the more determined to remain in the vicinity and worry the British all he possibly could.

"We will stay here till we find out what the British intend doing in the South," he told the "Liberty Boys," and they agreed that this was the thing to do.

They soon learned that it was going to be dangerous to remain anywhere near Charleston, however; they had supposed they could stay near the Jordan home, and Tom

Saunders and Will Forbes were in the seventh heaven of delight over the prospect of spending perhaps weeks there, but their dreams of happiness were rudely shattered. The British became so thick in the vicinity—and, indeed, in all directions within twenty-five to thirty miles of Charleston, that the party had to pull up stakes at night and slip away, keeping well in the timber as it went.

"Where are we going now, Dick?" asked Bob, when they were sure they had gotten through the British lines.

"I'll tell you where we will go, Bob. Up into the High Hills of the Santee."

"I've been there. They're about ten miles from here, aren't they?"

"Yes, about that."

"Well, I think that will be the best and safest place for us to go."

"So do I; once we are there we will be absolutely safe; all the British in South Carolina could not capture us."

"No; not if all the Tories in the State were to join in and help them."

"We will go right on up into the High Hills of the Santee, select a place and make a camp. Then we will settle down to worry the British all we can."

"And we are the boys that can do a lot of worrying when we settle down to it," said Bob.

"We will give them a lot of work, anyway," said Dick, "and I think we will be able to be of great benefit to many of the patriot settlers of this part of the country."

"Yes; the British will try to take all that the patriots have that is worth taking, and we will pounce down on the rascals, and make it lively for them at every opportunity."

"That's what we'll do."

The "Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" reached the High Hills of the Santee just at sunrise, and spent an hour looking for a suitable spot for an encampment.

One was found, then, that suited them, and they went into camp.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE HIGH HILLS OF SANTEE.

Dick had selected the camping spot with an eye to the safety of his men in case the camp was discovered by the British.

It was so situated that it would be impossible for the British to surround them; and they could retire through the timber, and along deep ravines and around the hills and would be able to get away without much trouble.

And from the tops of tall trees standing in the midst of the encampment it would be possible to see over the surrounding country for miles and miles.

It would not only be possible to see any party of red-coats that might be hunting for them, but it would also enable them to see foraging parties of the British and descend upon them and spoil their plans.

A lookout was sent up into one of the trees, and the rest went to work to make the camp comfortable for their stay.

The eighty natives of the region who had joined the "Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" were glad that Dick had decided to remain in the vicinity. They were anxious regarding the safety of their families, and they knew that if anyone could protect the patriot families Dick could do it.

That very afternoon the lookout reported that a foraging party of the British was to be seen, two miles away, at a house, and the "Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" was headed that way within a few minutes' time.

They got to the house just in time. The British troopers had been angered by the refusal of the settler to tell them where they would find gold or silver hidden, and had set fire to the house.

There were perhaps fifty of the troopers, but Dick and his men took them by surprise, and scattered them to the four winds.

Fourteen were killed, and six were wounded; the rest managed to reach their horses, mount, and make their escape.

The "Liberty Boys" buried the dead redcoats, and conveyed the wounded ones to the home of a Tory, who, so the patriot settler told them, lived half a mile away, and the Tory, of course, could not well refuse to take the wounded redcoats in and take care of them.

"And tell the redcoats, when they come to your house," said Dick, "that Dick Slater and his 'Horse Guard' is going to put a stop to the robbing and pillaging that is now being indulged in by the British soldiers."

"I'll tell them," the Tory said sullenly.

"See that you do; and tell them that if they harm any women or children, or burn any houses, it will go hard with them."

"I'll tell them," in the same sullen voice.

Only a dozen or so of the "Horse Guard" had come to the Tory's home, to bring the wounded redcoats; the rest had remained at the patriot home to put the fire out, that having been started by the British troopers, and they succeeded in doing it before it had done much damage.

Then, having finished what was to be done at the Tory's home, Dick and his comrades went back to the patriot's home. The fire had just been extinguished, and when Dick was pointed out to the patriot settler as the leader of the "Horse Guard," and his name was mentioned, the man shook hands with him, and thanked him earnestly for coming to the aid of himself and family.

"Oh, that is all right," said Dick. "That is what we are here for. We are going to remain in these parts and make it hot for the British, and put a stop to the way they have been doing, if we can do so."

The man shook his head doubtfully.

"You think we can't do it, eh?" said Dick.

"I'm afraid you can't."

"Well, it will be a big task, I suppose; but we will be able to hold them in check some, at any rate."

"Yes, you ought to be able to do that."

Then Dick and his comrades rode back to their camp in the hills.

They kept a lookout in the tree-top the whole time, and half an hour after they had got back the lookout announced that another party of redcoats was in sight.

"Are they at the home of a patriot?" asked Dick.

"No, but they are almost to a house, which is, I think, the home of a patriot."

"All right; keep your eye on them, and if they stop there let us know."

"All right."

Dick gave the order for the horses to be bridled and saddled, and this was done, and presently the lookout called out:

"They've stopped at the house."

"All right. Come down," called out Dick. "We'll make them wish they had stayed in Charleston."

The lookout descended quickly, and then all mounted their horses and rode away.

"Take the lead," said Dick to the youth who had been the lookout. "You know the way."

They rode at a gallop, and twenty minutes later the youth who was guiding the party brought his horse to a stop, and the others did likewise.

"The house where the redcoats were when I saw them is just around the bend ahead, yonder," he said. "I don't know whether they are there now or not, of course."

"We'll soon find out," said Dick.

Then he took the lead, and motioning to his followers, said:

"Follow me now, and come with a rush. Fire the instant you see me level my musket."

The youths nodded their heads, and then Dick rode forward at a gallop.

He dashed around the bend at full speed, and there, sure enough, were the British troopers.

They were busily engaged in robbing and plundering the house of the patriot.

"At them, 'Liberty Boys!'" cried Dick, in a loud, ringing voice. "Give it to the scoundrels! Kill them!"

A wild yell went up from the youths.

They watched Dick, and when he lifted his musket they did the same, and the next moment they fired a volley.

The British troopers had been taken by surprise, and perhaps a dozen of their men fell dead, while several were wounded, some quite seriously.

They fired a volley, wildly, without taking aim, and then fled into the timber at the back of the patriot's house, leaving their horses tied to the front yard fence.

It was a comparatively small party of troopers, not to exceed thirty, and almost half their number lay on the ground.

Dick called a halt, for he knew it would be folly to try to follow the redcoats, who could escape in the timber.

The patriot settler and his family were wild with delight on account of the coming of the party of patriots, and

when they learned who Dick was they were surprised, and thanked him earnestly for what he had done for them.

He told them that no thanks were due him; that he was there to render assistance to the patriot families, and make things lively for the British.

"Well, I guess those fellows think we have made it lively enough for them," grinned Bob.

"And we made them move lively, too," said Sam Sander-son.

"Yah, dot ish so," said Carl Gookenspieler.

"Oh, phwat's dhe madther wid yez, Dootchy?" cried Patsy Brannigan. "Shure, an' av all dhe 'Liberty Byes' wur loike yez, dherr wouldn't be much runnin' done by dhe ridcoats, begorra."

"I haf didded me mine shareness uf maging dose ret-goats run lige rappits, py shimmanetty," said Carl.

To do the two youths justice, they were both good fighters. They were utterly fearless, and Dick often told Bob and the others that he would hate to lose the two. They were not only as good fighters as any of the youths, but were a boon besides, in that they furnished amusement for the rest when there was nothing of interest going on, and when they were in camp."

"You are both all right," said Dick, "so stop your quarreling."

"Yes, stop quarreling and go to fighting," said Bob.

"Beggorra, an' it's mesilf would loike a chance at dhe Dootchy," said Patsy with a grin. "Oi would l'ave nothin' but a grease-spot, an' thot's dhe thruth."

"It would be a big grease-spot, Patsy," grinned Bob.

"I vould mage dot Irishmans up indo mincemeat uf ve vas to fight mit one anodder, alretty," said Carl.

Then the two subsided, for they saw Dick wanted to talk to the patriot.

After a brief conversation, Dick told the youths to bury the dead redcoats, and then a team was hitched to a wagon, the wounded troopers were placed in the wagon, on some straw, and they were taken to the home of a Tory who lived three-quarters of a mile away, where they were placed under the man's care, he being willing to look after the wounded men, because of the fact that they were British troopers.

Then the youths drove back to the home of the patriot, and found the "Liberty Boys" ready to take their departure. They took the horses belonging to the British when they went, and Dick told the farmer that they were where they could keep watch of his home, and that if the troopers came back to tell them they had better go about their business if they wished to live.

The patriot said he would do so, and then the party took its departure, and half an hour later was back at the encampment on the hill.

"Well, we have done pretty well, this afternoon," said Bob Estabrook.

"So we have," agreed Dick. "I hope we shall be able to do as well every day."

The others echoed this wish, and then, as it was getting

along toward evening, they set to work to get supper. They had taken some provisions from the home of the Tory where the wounded men had been taken, and had also bought some meat from the patriot farmer, and they were pretty well fixed, so far as food was concerned.

The lookout remained up in the top of the tree, and he told Dick that the redcoats who had fled to the woods had come forth, and after a conversation with the settler, had taken their departure.

"All right; I guess they have learned a lesson," said Dick. "Stay up there as long as you can see, and then come down and have some supper."

"All right. I'm mighty hungry, I tell you."

The youths cooked and ate their supper, and by this time it was dark, and the lookout came down and ate his supper. Then Dick stationed sentinels, for he did not intend that his force should be taken by surprise.

"We are here to take the British by surprise," he told Bob. "I don't intend that they shall turn the tables on us."

"That's right," agreed Bob.

CHAPTER XI.

THE "HORSE GUARD" AT WORK.

Next morning, leaving the "Liberty Boys" in camp, Dick and Bob mounted their horses and rode away on a scouting expedition.

Their idea was that the redcoats had been struck such hard blows, and that if they were to get a chance at other parties, they would have to look around in other directions for them.

So they rode away toward the west.

They rode slowly, and talked as they went along.

An hour and a half later they paused on the top of a high hill and gazed about them.

Suddenly Bob exclaimed:

"Look yonder, Dick!"

"Where, Bob?"

Bob pointed toward the north.

Half a mile away was a large house, almost a mansion, and it was evidently the home of a planter who was quite well to do, for there was a number of cottages for the negroes. In front of the house were three wagons, and in these wagons articles of various kinds were being placed.

"What does it mean, Dick?"

"I think that it is plain enough, Bob. Those men who are putting the things in the wagon are British soldiers, aren't they?"

"Yes; I see the red uniforms."

"Exactly; well, it is a foraging party, and they are loading the wagons with valuables from the house.

"It looks that way."

"Yes; the owner of the place is a patriot, undoubtedly."

"And I suppose the redcoats will drive to Charleston with the wagons."

"Yes—if they are not interfered with."

Bob started and gave Dick a quick, eager look.

"Then you are thinking of—"

He stopped, and Dick nodded.

"Yes, Bob; we must head this party off and put a stop to its work."

"But how are you going to do it? The boys are not here."

"They must be brought here, Bob."

"Ah!"

"I will give you the work of getting the boys here, Bob, while I remain and keep watch of the enemy."

"Shall I have them come right back here?"

"No; the wagons will probably be five miles from here, in the direction of Charleston before you could get back."

"Then where shall we go?"

"Aim to strike this road at a point ten miles south from here."

"Will you be there?"

"Yes; I'll keep watch from here, and when the British start, I will start also, and will keep ahead of them, and join you before we make an attack."

"All right; I'm off."

"Ride as fast as possible, Bob."

"I will."

Bob rode away, going back in the direction from which he and Dick had come only a few minutes before.

He rode hard, and three-quarters of an hour later arrived at the camp.

"Hello! What's the mater?"

"Where's Dick?"

"Did you get into trouble?"

"Surely Dick hasn't been captured?"

"Why have you returned alone, Bob?"

Such were a few of the questions fired at Bob.

"Nothing is the matter, boys; Dick is all right," said Bob. "Bridle and saddle your horses at once. There is work for us."

The youths asked no more questions, but hastened to do as told. If there was work to do they were eager to get at it.

Fifteen minutes later the entire force was in the saddle and riding away toward the southwest.

Then Bob explained as they rode along, telling what he and Dick had seen.

The youths were excited and eager.

"We'll capture the redcoats," said one.

"Yes, or kill them," from another.

"Jove, you say there are three wagons, Bob?" asked another.

"Yes."

"Well, those fellows must have gone into the robbing business on a large scale."

"That's right," said Bob; "they seemed to be taking almost everything of value out of the mansion."

"What will we do with the stuff, Bob—take it back to the place where the redcoats got it?"

"Yes; we don't want it. We are here to protect the patriots and make trouble for the redcoats, and that is all we care for."

"All we take from anybody will be something in the way of provisions for ourselves and horses," said Mark Morrison.

"That's it," said Bob.

The youths rode at a gallop, and an hour later struck the road that they believed the wagons would traverse in going to Charleston.

Bob called a halt, and looked up the road as far as possible. He could see nothing of Dick, but the road made a bend not more than half a mile away, and that was as far as he could see.

"Let's ride up to the top of this hill, here," he said, pointing. "I think we will be able to see quite a distance up the road from there."

The youths rode up to the top of the hill, and looked toward the north. They could see bits of the road for a distance of a mile or more, and presently they saw a horseman ride around a bend perhaps three-quarters of a mile distant.

"There's Dick!" exclaimed Bob.

"You are right," said Sam Sanderson.

It was Dick, sure enough, and as he was riding at a gallop he was soon at the point opposite where the youths were.

Bob gave utterance to a shrill whistle, and Dick brought his horse to a stop, and looked up toward the top of the hill.

He saw the "Liberty Boys," and turning his horse's head, rode up the slope and joined them.

"Well, you're on hand, I see," he greeted.

"Yes," said Bob. "Where are the redcoats?"

"They are coming; of course, they travel much slower than I have been traveling, and are doubtless two or three miles behind."

"How many redcoats are there, Dick?"

"About fifty."

"In what order are they traveling?"

"There is a party of twenty-five or such matter ahead of the wagons, and another party of about the same number behind them."

"What will we do—go for the first party, or let it pass?"

"Oh, we will attack it."

"But won't the other party, and the drivers of the wagons hear the firing and take the alarm?"

"I'll fix that. About half our party will ride on down the road half a mile or so, and lie in wait there. We will remain here with the other half. When the party of twenty-five redcoat troopers come along, we won't bother them, but will let them go on down the road. But when they get to where the other party of 'Liberty Boys' are, they will make an attack."

"I see; and you expect the wagons to be here by that time."

"Yes; and we will attack the drivers, and the other party of troopers."

"That's a good scheme."

"I think so; now you take forty of the boys and go on down the road three-quarters of a mile or a mile, Bob; I will remain here with the rest."

"All right."

Bob designated the youths who were to accompany him, and they set out, riding back down to the road, and then down it, presently disappearing around a bend in the road.

The youths who were left on the hilltop turned their attention up the road, and presently they saw a wagon come around the bend three-quarters of a mile away. Presently another came in sight, and then still another. There was a strip of road perhaps two or three hundred yards long that could be seen, and when the wagons again disappeared behind the intervening ridge, a party of horsemen was seen come around the bend three-quarters of a mile away.

"I thought you said there was a party of twenty-five redcoats ahead of the wagons, Dick," said Sam Sander-son.

"There is; back among the trees, all, so they won't see us. They will be around the bend here in a few moments."

"Ah, they must have got across the open bit of road while we were looking after Bob and the boys."

"Yes, that is it."

The youths rode back in among the trees, and dismounted. Then they peered down and watched with interest.

Only a few minutes passed, and then a party of troopers rode around the bend, and moved down the road.

There were about twenty-five of them, and they rode past the point where the youths were, and on down the road, disappearing around the bend a few minutes later.

"Jove, I hope our boys are out of sight of the redcoats!" said Mark Morrison.

"They are," said Dick. "The road twists and turns among the hills, and it is impossible to see more than a quarter of a mile ahead, and our boys are at least half a mile ahead of the redcoats."

"Yes, I guess they are."

Then the youths turned their attention in the direction from which the wagons were coming.

"Are we to rush down and make an attack on the drivers of the wagons as soon as they appear, Dick?" asked one of the youths.

"We will wait till the first wagon is almost even with us; then we will ride down and stop the three of them. By that time the other party of troopers will be in sight, and we will charge the scoundrels, leaving three or four of our number to guard the wagons and see that the drivers don't try to get away."

"All right; we'll remember the programme, and will follow it to the letter."

Presently the first wagon came creeping around the bend in the road a quarter of a mile distant.

"It is time to mount our horses, boys," said Dick.

All did so, and then they sat there, peering down at the wagons, all three of which were now in sight.

"You see there is a redcoat on the seat beside each of the drivers," said Dick. "If either of the three attempt to shoot put a bullet through him."

"We will," was the grim reply.

The wagons crawled slowly along. They would soon be even with the spot where the youths were in waiting.

"Ready, boys," said Dick. "When I give the signal, ride down and head the wagons off; then be ready to charge the troopers the instant they come in sight around the bend."

The members of "The Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" nodded to signify that they understood what was expected of them.

Suddenly Dick gave utterance to the expected signal—a low, tremulous whistle.

The "Liberty Boys" dashed down the slope, and headed the wagons off. They shot the guard of the first wagon, and the driver elevated his hands in terror.

"Don't shoot!" he cried.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROUT OF THE REDCOATS.

The guard that had been shot had attempted to shoot at the "Liberty Boys" as they dashed toward the wagon he was on, and he had paid for his temerity with his life.

The other two guards profited by the experience of their comrade, and threw down their muskets and held up their hands, to show that they had no intention of offering resistance.

"Mark, you and two of the boys guard the wagons," said Dick. "We will look after the troopers."

Then he turned to his followers and said:

"Come on, boys; the troopers will be around the bend in a moment, and we must give them a surprise. We'll meet them as they come."

He urged his horse forward at a gallop, the other youths following, and just as they passed the hindmost wagon the party of troopers came dashing around the bend in the road.

When they saw the force they were up against they reined their horses back upon their haunches, and this action caused them to be taken at a disadvantage, for the horses were not expecting to be stopped so suddenly, and many of them reared and plunged on account of the pain caused to their mouths by the bits.

The "Liberty Boys" were now within musket-shot distance, and Dick ordered them to fire.

The youths obeyed, firing a volley that tumbled eight men from the saddles.

"Now charge!" cried Dick. "Charge, and give them a pistol volley!"

The youths dashed forward, giving utterance to wild yells.

The redcoats fired a scattering volley, but their horses were leaping and cavorting to such an extent that none of the bullets did any damage, and then the "Liberty Boys" fired a volley from their pistols.

That settled it; those who were still in the saddle—about one-half the number that had ridden around the bend a few moments before—whirled their horses and dashed wildly back around the bend and disappeared from sight.

The "Liberty Boys" would have followed, but Dick called them back.

"Let them go," he said. "We have done well enough. Ah, listen to that!"

Away, toward the south, was heard the sound of firing.

Bob and his boys are attacking the other party of troopers!" Sam cried. "Let some of us go to their assistance."

"I don't think they will need any assistance," said Dick; "but twenty-five of you boys may go. You may be able to head off some of the fugitives."

The youths divided up into two parties, and one of the parties dashed away, down the road, leaving Dick and twenty-five "Liberty Boys" to guard the wagons.

The firing did not continue long, down the road, and twenty minutes later the entire party of "Liberty Boys" that had been down that way came riding up.

"What luck did you have, Bob?" asked Dick.

"Good luck, Dick. We downed twenty of the redcoated rascals."

"Only a few got away, eh?"

"Five or six."

"How many dead and how many wounded, Bob?"

"Sixteen dead, four wounded."

"Jove, you boys must have taken good aim before you pulled trigger."

"We did. But how did you come out here?"

"We killed one of the guards on the wagons, and fourteen of the troopers are down—eight dead and six wounded."

"Well, what is to be done with the ten wounded men, Dick?"

"We'll put them in the wagons and take them to the home of a good loyalist and make him take them in."

"Good! There's a house down near where we struck the redcoats, and I think from the way the owner of the place talked and looked—he came out to where we were, after the affair was over—that he is a Tory."

"Very good. Boys, lay hold and place the six wounded

men in the head wagon, yonder, and we will take them on down to the Tory's house."

This was done, the "Liberty Boys" handling the wounded men as carefully as was possible, for the youths were humane and more tender of heart than might have been expected.

"Now, part of the force will remain here and watch the wagons, and guard against the return of the dozen or so troopers that ran away so fast, while the rest of us will accompany this wagon that has the wounded men in it."

Dick and about forty of the "Liberty Boys" accompanied the wagon that had the wounded men in it, and twenty minutes later they arrived at the home of the man they suspected of being a Tory. When they got there they found that he and his boy, a youth of sixteen or seventeen years, had carried the four wounded troopers into the house, and this made Dick sure the man was a Tory.

"I've brought you some more patients," he said, addressing the farmer.

"You have hey?" in a sullen voice.

"Yes."

"How many?"

"Six."

"Waal, I guess ye'll hev ter bring 'em in, but I'm blamed ef I know whur we'll put 'em. I hain't got enny too much room, ez et is."

"Oh, they won't need much room. Just spread some blankets on the floor, and we will bring the wounded men in and place them on the blankets."

"All right."

Twenty minutes later the ten wounded men were lying side by side on blankets spread on the floor of an extra room, and Dick went to work to do what he could for the poor fellows.

Six of them were painfully, but not seriously wounded, but four were very seriously wounded, and Dick doubted whether they would recover, even with the best of care.

He dressed the wounds of these four first, and then attended to the six.

"There; that's the best that can be done for them, with the limited means at our command," he said. "You had better send your boy to Charleston for a physician."

"Thet's whut I thort I'd do; I kain't hev all these heer woounded men heer, fur we hain't fixed ter take keer uv 'em."

"I suppose not."

Then Dick went out to where the "Liberty Boys" were in waiting, the old farmer accompanying him.

"Who air ye fellers, ennyhow?" he asked, looking at the youths curiously, and in a manner not overfriendly.

"Oh, we are a party of young chaps who haven't much to do, so we simply ride around the country and pop over the redcoats whenever we see them robbing and plundering the farmers."

"Who hev they be'n robbin' an' plunderin'?"

"A lot of farmers farther up the road."

"How'd d'ye know?"

"We saw them doing it."

"Ye did?"

"Yes; that wagon, there, is filled with plunder from the big house on the lefthand side of the road, seven or eight miles from here."

"Whur ther nigger cabins air?"

"Yes."

"Waal, thet man is er rebel, an' ther British troopers hev er right ter take whutever they want frum rebels."

"Oh, they have the right to do that, eh?" remarked Dick, looking keenly and somewhat sternly at the Tory.

"Yas," was the sullen and somewhat defiant reply.

"Well, now, if that is true, then we, who are patriots, have the right to take anything you, a Tory, have that pleases us."

"I don' see et thet way. Ye air rebels, a-fightin' erg'inst ther king, an' all who air in symperthy with ye orter be robbed uv ever'thin' they hev."

"That may be the way you look at it, but we don't. We believe that the king has no right to rule over us, and in a few years he won't be doing so. Then you will wish you had been on our side and helped make yourself a free man."

"I'm free enuff now"

"No, you are not; you work here like a slave, and have to give up a portion of what you earn to a man who lives across the ocean, a man you have never seen, and who has never seen you."

"And a man who doesn't want to see you," said Bob. "What is more, he wouldn't speak to you if he were to meet you. He would look upon you as being fit only for him to wipe his feet on. Do you like to work for such a man as that?"

"Oh, I don't berleeve whut ye say," was the growling reply.

"Of course you don't," said Bob. "A man who wants to remain the slave of a man whom he never saw and never will see, and to whom he owes nothing at all, hasn't sense enough to recognize the truth when he hears it, or to believe it."

"I've got ez much sense ez ye hev," growled the man.

Bob laughed. "If I thought that I would go off somewhere and drown myself," he said.

The other youths laughed, and this made the Tory so mad that he snorted angrily and went back into the house.

"Now we will go back, boys," said Dick. "But, first, one of you go and get a spade from this old Tory, and we will bury the dead redcoats when we get back to where the other two wagons are."

"What about these dead troopers, Dick?" asked Bob, pointing to the still forms lying around.

"Let the man who likes to be a slave to King George work for him, by burying the king's dead subjects," was the reply.

"That's right; that's the thing."

One of the "Liberty Boys" went to the door and asked if

the man had a spade he could let them have, and he told why they wanted it.

"Yas, I hev two spades," was the reply.

"Well, keep one for your own use," said the youth. "There are sixteen dead redcoats out here, and you will have to bury them, which you will of course be only too glad to do, since you are such an ardent admirer of the king."

"Yas, I'll bury 'em. Don't ye worry erbout thet."

He got a spade and gave it to the "Liberty Boy," who placed it in the wagon, and then the mule team was turned around, and the party made its way back up the road.

Twenty minutes later they reached the spot where the other youths were guarding the two wagons, and received the report that all was quiet.

They buried the dead redcoats, after which the other two wagons were turned around, and the entire party made its way back up the road.

Of course, they could not go very fast, for the wagons were loaded pretty heavily, and it was nearly two hours before they reached the mansion from which most of the plunder in the three wagons had been taken.

Their coming was a great surprise to the patriot owner of the plantation, who had not expected to ever again see any of his property.

And when he learned who Dick and his comrades were he gave them a hearty Southern welcome.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" AT A DANCE.

The man's name was James Hosterman, and he insisted that the youths should remain and take supper with him. Dick said there were too many of his men, but the planter said no, that he could take care of all, so Dick consented. He knew the man would feel greatly disappointed if they did not stay.

There were scores of negroes on the place—slaves, of course—and a lot of them took the youths' horses and led them away, to give them feed and water. A lot more went to work, unloading the wagons and carrying the valuable old furniture and other plunder back into the mansion, from which it had been taken only a couple of hours before.

Other negroes were busy in the kitchen, cooking for the one hundred guests, and extra tables were being placed in the great dining-room, for it was the purpose of Mr. Hosterman to seat them all at the same time.

When everything was working smoothly, and the youths were seated on the broad piazza. Mr. Hosterman invited Dick to enter, and led him to the drawing-room, and introduced him to Mrs. Hosterman and Miss Louise Hosterman, their daughter, a young lady of perhaps twenty years. She was very beautiful, and it was plain that she was great-

ly impressed by Dick's appearance. Doubtless not many as handsome, manly-looking young fellows as he were to be found in the neighborhood.

The conversation was lively, and many questions were asked by the three, all of which Dick answered promptly. The three wondered how Dick and his men had succeeded in escaping capture, when Charleston was surrendered, and Dick explained that his force was outside the city at the time.

The three thanked Dick most earnestly for bringing their furniture and valuables back to them. They had not expected to ever again see any of the stuff that had been taken.

When supper was ready all repaired to the great dining-room, where a small table had been placed for the family, and the young commander of the "Liberty Boys' Horse Guard." The members of the force sat at two long tables, which reached almost clear across the room.

There was a splendid supper on the table, and the youths certainly enjoyed it. They had been living on coarse camp fare for a long while, and this meal was a luxury to them.

Talk and laughter was heard on every side, and all enjoyed themselves hugely.

It was evident that Miss Louise had taken a great fancy to Dick, but he was careful not to pay any particular attention to her, as he did not wish to make an impression on her. He had a sweetheart up in New York State, and was not desirous of making himself liked by any other girl.

He talked to Mr. Hosterman and his wife fully as much as he did to the girl.

When supper was over the youths went out on the piazza, for it was a beautiful evening, and this was a very pleasant place to sit.

The youths talked of the encounter with the British troopers, and all were very well satisfied with the outcome of the affair.

Mr. Hosterman asked Dick how long he expected to remain in the South.

"I don't know, sir," was the reply. "I thought of staying as long as I could be of any great benefit to the patriot settlers in these parts. The British are very bold and arrogant, since capturing Charleston, and will need to be checked, or they will be very cruel and heartless in their treatment of patriots."

"True, Mr. Slater. But I think that a few such lessons as they received this afternoon will teach them to behave themselves."

"It will help to do so, at any rate, sir."

"I should think, though," said the planter, "that it would be extremely dangerous for you to remain here, with such a small force as you have. Are you not afraid that the British will hunt you down and make prisoners of you?"

"Not much afraid, sir. I don't believe that the entire British army could capture us amid the High Hills of Santee."

"It would be difficult, I judge, if you are familiar with the ins and outs of the hills."

"Well, I have been through the hills before, and know them pretty well. I don't think the British could possibly know them as well as I do."

"Probably the British have not much knowledge of the country, but they may secure the services of Tories who have, and get them to act as guides for their forces."

"That is true; in that case, they might make it pretty lively for us."

"I should think so; and I would advise that you be constantly on your guard."

"We shall be on our guard all the time; another thing I would like to do, if possible, and that would be to rescue some of the patriot soldiers from the hands of the British."

"Down at Charleston, you mean?"

"Yes."

The planter shook his head. "I don't think that you could possibly do that," he said.

"Well, of course it would be a difficult matter, but I do not think it an impossibility."

"You may be right. Still, I am going to watch for an opportunity to do something of the kind, while keeping watch of the foraging parties of redcoats and putting a stop to their work."

Presently Mrs. Hosterman called her husband into the house, and he told Dick to excuse him, that he would be right back. He was gone perhaps five minutes, and when he returned he told Dick that his wife had suggested that they send for some of the young folks of the vicinity and have a dance while the "Liberty Boys" were there.

"I will see what the boys say about it, Mr. Hosterman," said Dick. "If they wish to stay we will do so."

He went and had a talk with the youths. All were eager for it. Eighty of the youths were Southerners, and they felt perfectly at home at the mansion, as they were accustomed to Southern hospitality and the ways of the Southerners. The twenty "Liberty Boys" were not averse to some sport, though, and so Dick went back and told Mr. Hosterman that the youths were pleased with the idea.

"But can you get up a party of young people of both sexes on such short notice?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; we can have thirty young men and the same number of young ladies here within one hour's time," was the reply. "This is quite a thickly settled region."

Mr. Hosterman at once sent out negro messengers, to the number of a dozen at least, with instructions to visit the homes of the neighborhood, and tell the young people to come to the mansion at once.

The negroes hastened away on their errand, and did their work well. As may well be supposed, the young people of the neighborhood were only too glad of the chance to come to the mansion and see the "Liberty Boys," and dance with them. They had heard the news of the way the "Liberty Boys" had beaten the British troopers, and were eager to make the acquaintance of the young men.

Especially was this the case with the girls, and it may be taken for granted that the maidens were unusually careful with their toilets that evening, and that they put on their best and finest dresses.

As Mr. Hosterman had promised would be the case, thirty young men and the same number of maidens were at the mansion within the hour.

All the rooms on the ground floor were lighted up, and the big dining-room was cleared of the tables, and was to be used for dancing purposes, on account of the floor being bare.

Dick did not lose sight of the fact that he and his men were practically in the enemy's country, and he placed out four sentinels, two a hundred yards south of the mansion, and two about the same distance to the north.

"We will change the guards every half-hour," he told the boys, "and that will not make it a hardship on any of us."

This was satisfactory to the youths.

An old plantation negro, with his fiddle, had put in an appearance, and soon the dancing began. Jollity reigned supreme. The young men of the neighborhood were very generous, in that they did not do much dancing, but permitted the "Liberty Boys" to do most of it, and this pleased the girls greatly. They could dance with their beaux at any time, but they might never again have an opportunity to dance with the members of the company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76." They considered this quite an honor, and all the girls were eager to dance with Dick Slater.

Even Patsy Brannigan and Carl Gookenspieler danced, and the antics of the Irishman, and the grotesque motions of the Dutch youth occasioned great amusement. The two kept making sarcastic remarks about each other, and this kept the young folks laughing, for some of the things the two said would have made a dog laugh.

"Those two are comical fellows, Captain Slater," said a young lady who was dancing with Dick.

"Yes," he said. "They are a boon to the members of my company, for they keep up in good spirits when otherwise we would be very much depressed."

"Are they really angry at each other, Mr. Slater?"

"Oh, no; that is their way of talking and acting toward each other. They are fast friends, and would fight for each other much quicker than they would engage in a fight with each other."

"Well, anyone who doesn't understand would think they were very angry at each other, and that they would soon engage in a fight."

"Yes; but I really believe that if one were to lose his life in a battle with the British the other would be so heartbroken and lonesome that he would die."

"Well, well! That is very strange; one would not expect to see an Irishman and a Dutchman such close friends."

"No; as a rule they don't think a great deal of one another."

Every girl Dick danced with asked him about Patsy and Carl, and he had to explain the matter over and over again. It was fun for the young men of the neighborhood, who were playing the part of wall flowers, and they were glad that they had something to amuse themselves with. They laughed till they cried, almost, at the antics of the Irish and Dutch youths.

"I wouldn't have missed this for anything," said one to a companion.

"Nor I," was the reply. "I would be willing to do without dancing at all this evening, in order to let those two fellows be on the floor."

"So would I; they are worth looking at."

The dancing went merrily on, and all seemed to be enjoying themselves. Every half-hour four of the youths went out and relieved the four who were on guard, and so all had a chance to dance and enjoy themselves.

Dick, seeing that Patsy and Carl were furnishing so much entertainment for all, did not send either of them out to stand guard, and thus the fun was kept up by the two during the whole evening.

At midnight a grand supper was served, and although the "Liberty Boys" had eaten a splendid meal at six o'clock in the evening, they were ready for another. It was not often they got a chance to enjoy luxuries, and they were inclined to make the most of the opportunity.

After the supper the dancing was continued, and the fun was at its height, when, about half-past one o'clock, one of the sentinels rushed into the mansion, and called out:

"A force of horsemen is coming, Dick! Likely they are British dragoons!"

Instantly all was confusion.

CHAPTER XIV.

PLAYING HIDE AND SEEK IN THE HIGH HILLS.

"How large a force is it, do you think?" asked Dick, hastening to the youth.

"I don't know, Dick, but the chances are that it is too strong a force for us to fight against."

"Just then the other three sentinels came rushing in with the report that it was a strong force, and Dick at once called the "Liberty Boys" around him, and said:

"We will slip out the back way, boys, and leave the young folks here. They must keep right on dancing, and when the redcoats ask where we are, they must deny that we have been here."

The youths then hastened out of the mansion, by the rear way, and Dick explained to Mr. Hosterman what he wished done. The planter said he would see to it that the programme was carried out, and the old negro went to work, at the command, and played energetically, while the young men and women of the neighborhood went to

dancing with all their might. The girls were pale, however, and were evidently greatly frightened. They were disappointed, also, on account of the departure of the "Liberty Boys."

The dancing was going on at a great rate when there came a loud knock on the door. Mr. Hosterman went to the door, and was there when the negro servant opened it. On the threshold stood a British cavalry officer—a captain.

"Where are those scoundrelly rebels?" the captain cried, glaring through the doorway, and into the room in which the dancing was going on.

"What rebels do you have reference to, sir?" asked Mr. Hosterman.

"You know very well," was the gruff reply. "Dick Slater and his 'Liberty Boys,' as he calls them."

"They are not here," was the reply.

"Who are those young men in there, then?"

"They are neighbor boys, and we are having a dance, sir."

"But those scoundrelly rebels were here. They killed a number of British soldiers this afternoon, and recovered a lot of property and brought it back to you. You cannot deny it."

"I make no attempt to deny that, sir; but they went away again."

"How long ago?"

"Oh, three or four hours ago."

"I believe you are lying, sir, and if you don't tell me when those rebels went, and where they went, we will take you out and hang you to a tree!"

The dancing had ceased, and a crowd of young men and maidens had approached the door. Cries of terror escaped the lips of the girls at this.

"Oh, sir, don't do that!" cried several in unison.

"Don't hurt my father!" pleaded Louise Hosterman.

"I will hang him, just as sure as anything, if he doesn't tell me when and where those scoundrelly rebels went."

At this instant the roar of a musket volley was heard, and with a cry of anger the captain whirled and dashed back to where his men were.

Dick Slater was not the youth to let a chance slip to strike an enemy a blow. His idea, when they made their way out by way of the back door was to size up the force of the redcoats, and if it was not too formidable, strike it a blow. With this idea in his mind, he stole around, and as it was a clear, beautiful night, he was enabled to get a fairly good view of the British. He judged there were two hundred of the troopers, and this was odds of only two to one, which was not too great. He at once told his men to get ready to fire a volley, and they had crept around to where they could get a good chance, and at the signal, a low, tremulous whistle, had fired a volley, which did a great deal of damage.

It had come unexpectedly, and a score or more of saddles were emptied. On the air rose wild yells, shrieks, and groans, and some of the horses were wounded, and began

rearing and plunging. This, of course, frightened the other horses, and soon the animals were all rearing, plunging, and snorting in terror.

The captain hastened to rejoin his men, and yelled at them to fire a volley; but they were too busy trying to control their frightened horses, and the "Liberty Boys" did the firing, a volley from their pistols doing much to increase the demoralization of the enemy.

In spite of the commands from the British captain, the entire force of troopers went dashing away down the road, and he, not being able to find his horse, had to run across the road, and take refuge in the timber, where he almost tore his hair, so great was his rage.

He made his way down, parallel with the road, and finally found a riderless horse, which he mounted and rode at a gallop till he overtook his men.

He ordered them to halt, which they did, they being now over their sudden fright, and having regained control of their horses.

"Why did you flee like a party of cowardly militiamen?" the captain cried. "I am ashamed of you! Why did you not remain and kill every one of the cowardly rebels?"

"Our horses became unmanageable, sir," was the reply, from one of the troopers. "We tried to hold them, but could not."

"I suppose that any excuse is better than none," growled the captain.

Then he told the men to follow him. "We will go back and wipe up the earth with those rascally rebels," he said. "Hold your muskets in readiness for instant use, and when we get within shooting distance don't hesitate an instant, but give it to them, and keep right on going, following up the musket volley with more from the pistols."

The men said they would. They were well over their fright, now, and were eager to get even with the youths who had made such havoc among them.

Back the party went, at a gallop, till they were within two hundred yards of the mansion, and then the speed was slackened to a walk.

They held their muskets in readiness for instant use, as the captain had ordered, but they were not giving the enemy credit for as much shrewdness as they were possessed of. Dick Slater was smarter than any redcoat in the party, and he had instructed his men to move up the road in the direction taken by the redcoats, which had been done. They had crossed over, at a point one hundred and fifty yards distant, and had concealed themselves in the edge of the timber. They were waiting there, muskets in hand, and when the troopers came along Dick gave the signal, the low, tremulous whistle, and the one hundred youths poured a volley into the enemy, with disastrous effect, at least thirty of the troopers going down, dead and wounded.

The captain yelled for the troopers to fire, and they did so this time. But they did scarcely any damage, for the "Liberty Boys" were behind trees, and the bullets could not reach them, save in a few instances, where the trees

were small, and the bullets inflicted wounds in an arm or leg of the youths.

The "Liberty Boys" fired two volleys from their pistols, and this was more than the troopers could withstand. Their horses were rearing and plunging, some of them being wounded, and all being frightened, and the result was that the force again dashed away down the road.

That ended the fighting for that night. The captain was among those who had gone down, and the troopers who had fled kept on going, and made their way back to Charleston, where they told a wonderful story of how they had been attacked by an overwhelming force and half their number killed and wounded.

Generals Clinton and Cornwallis hardly knew what to think. They did not think it possible that any very large force could be in the vicinity of Charleston, but the troopers stuck to their story that it was a strong force, of at least five hundred, and the result was that a regiment was started out that forenoon, with instructions to hunt the enemy down and kill or capture the rebels.

The regiment was nearly two days in marching to the home of the planter, Mr. Hosterman, and when they got there they found the mansion had been turned into a temporary hospital. There were twenty-seven British troopers there, wounded and being taken care of, and among them was the captain of the force that had met with such a reverse, and he told them that seventy of his men had been killed.

"How many of the rebels are there?" was asked. He replied that so far as he had been able to learn there was about one hundred of them, and this filled the officers of the regiment of foot soldiers with amazement.

"Your men, who came to Charleston with the news of the trouble said that there were at least five hundred of the rebels," said one; "and we have brought a regiment with us!"

"Well, you'll need all the men you have brought, I'm thinking," was the quiet reply.

The officer in question looked wonderingly at the captain.

"I guess the wound you have has taken all the grit out of you, captain," he said.

"I am a British soldier, and as proud of the fact as you can be, sir," was the reply, "but at the same time I must say that you are mistaken. You would lose your wager, if you were to make it."

"I can't believe it. We will very quickly kill or capture the force of rebels in question."

"I hope you may succeed in doing so; but I fear that you will have a hard task doing it."

It turned out to be as the captain predicted. The regiment set out to try to run the "Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" down and wipe it off the face of the earth, but the British soldiers soon learned that they had undertaken no small task. The "Liberty Boys" were more familiar with the Hills of the Santee than the British soldiers were, and were able to keep out of the way. The fact that they were

on horseback, while their enemies were on foot, made it possible for them to practically laugh at their enemies, for they could get away at any time, and without much trouble.

Dick was careful, and did not permit his force to be surrounded. He kept well out of the way, and several times he succeeded in catching a portion of the British force away from the main force, and struck hard blows, killing and wounding a number of men each time.

The officers of the regiment were wild with rage, and did their best to get at the little force of "rebels," but could not, and finally they returned to Charleston and reported that it was impossible to catch the enemy.

Generals Clinton and Cornwallis were angry, and ordered that the work of running the "Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" to earth be kept up. It was kept up, but was unsuccessful, for the youths were too smart to permit themselves to be captured. They were at home on the High Hills of Santee, while the redcoats were not, and thus they had all the advantage.

Tom Saunders and Will Forbes made several trips to the home of the Jordans, near Charleston, and courted the two girls, Ruth and Lizzie; on one or two occasions they came very near being captured, but this had no effect toward keeping them away. They were deeply in love with the two patriot girls, and would have gone there if they had been forced to run a gantlet of redcoats all the way.

The "Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" grew to be such a terror to the British that they were almost afraid to venture into the country on foraging expeditions at all, and would not do so unless there were three or four hundred in the force, and finally Dick decided that they had done as much good as they could do in the South, and gave the eighty Southern youths permission to return to their homes, while he and the nineteen youths who were original members of "The Liberty Boys of '76" returned to the North.

The "Liberty Boys' Horse Guard" was remembered and talked about by the people of South Carolina many years after the close of the Revolutionary War.

THE END.

The next number (129) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS AND AARON BURR; OR, BATTLING FOR INDEPENDENCE," by Harry Moore.

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